

DECEMBER 2007

This Old House

Where to Buy the Best

fireplace mantels, stair railings,
hardwood floors, and more



SEE INSIDE

TO START AN EVERGREEN
FAMILY TRADITION

Plus:

Pick the right paint colors
Vintage-style kitchen design
Retrofit radiant heat
83 holiday gifts



A Tree for All Seasons

Why delegate your Christmas tree to the mulch pile when all the yuletide family fun is done? Instead, buy a living specimen that you can decorate, the natural way, later. Not only will you improve your landscape, you'll have a reminder of the annual festivities, one you can watch grow year after year—right along with your kids. Once the tree has taken root, the whole clan can gather outside to trim it ever more—with edible garlands for wildlife to feed on or strings of all-weather lights. If space allows, continue the tradition through the years to cultivate a Christmas grove all your own.



TURN TO PAGE 76 TO
LEARN HOW TO GET
DIRECTOR AND
PLANT YOUR OWN
**LIVING
CHRISTMAS
TREE**



HYUNDAI presents

FAMILY-TIME FUN

Go to www.thisoldhouse.com/family-projects to vote for your favorite family project and **ENTER** for a chance to **WIN!**

TWELVE (12) FIRST PRIZES (selected randomly from all entries)

• \$100 gift certificates from The Home Depot

ONE (1) GRAND PRIZE (chosen by This Old House editors from the First Prize finalists)

- Winner's choice of one of the featured family projects
- Tools and materials needed to construct the project
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- Opportunity to have your family photo in a future family project booklet



■ STEP STOOL



■ WALL CUSHIES



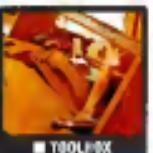
■ EASEL



■ SWING



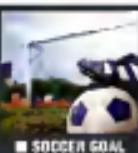
■ BAT HOUSE



■ TOOLBOX



■ LEMONADE STAND



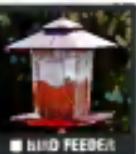
■ SOCCER GOAL



■ SANDBOX



■ FORT



■ BIRD FEEDER



■ TOY CHEST

PHOTOGRAPHY



PREDICTION

第十一章

**IF FAMILIES THAT
PLAY TOGETHER STAY
TOGETHER, WHAT ARE
YOU WAITING FOR?**

Hyundai wants to help families get off the couch and away from the video games for more quality time together. Beginning next month, we're sponsoring a series of webcasts that include how-to-follow instructions, safety tips, and shopping and tool lists for projects that parents and kids can build and enjoy together.

Look for the first Family Project booklet in the January issue of This Old House and visit www.thisoldhouse.com/family-projects for how-to videos and more ideas to help you find the winter home blues.

CONTINUED ON Page

Coming Soon

FAMILY PROJECTS

Watch for the first
Hyundai-sponsored booklet
featuring how-to plans for a
handy toolbox in next month's
issue of *This Old House*.



 HYUNDAI

www.merriam-webster.com

RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND, ON THIS 11TH DAY OF MAY, 1996, BY [Signature] (Title: Notary Public)

If you saw the size of my grandson, you'd be impressed.



New Fishing pole

New best friend

Three weeks ago I looked outside and said, "Today's the day I'm taking my grandson Brian fishing." So I fished out my Citi card to buy the worms,  the sure-fire lures,  and Brian picked out a brandnew rod. We spent a lot of time getting to know each other on that lake.  And while we weren't able to reel in the Big One, it didn't matter. Because wouldn't you know it, I ended up getting hooked on an 8-year-old kid. Whatever your story is, your Citi card can help you write it.

What's your story?



citicards.com

citi
let's get it done!



The only thing standing between you and your new LG appliances are your old appliances.



When was the last time you felt inspired by your kitchen? Inspired to host a party, tackle a new recipe or just sit back and admire the view? Perhaps it's time to experience the new LG Kitchen Series. It's a collection of appliances that balances elegant design with a luxurious set of features. The French Door refrigerator boasts auto-closing doors and the instant water dispenser available. This range offers an accelerated preheat time* and the dishwasher is one of the quietest on the market. Isn't it time your dream kitchen became your reality? **[LGUSA.COM](#)**



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Comfort. It's what we do.

We also make furniture.



TOE RECLINER

It's unlikely that *This Old House* readers will ever sit in the same chair as the famous *Reclining Footrest*, but here's a comfortable alternative—a three-part family of comfort.

We're a company dedicated to comfort. Not the kind you feel or comfort either—the kind you can sit in. We've got everything we do, from our fine upholstery and buttery soft fabrics, to our all-new recliners and trackless armchairs. So take a seat, comfort consciousness, and realize that the world looks considerably better from a reclined position.

Learn more about the Reclining Footrest and other comfortably reclined furniture at lazboy.com.

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House

NEW! Essential Holiday Advice

Set up the tree

Hang the lights

Spruce up the fireplace

Buy the gifts

Keep the roof
clear for Santa

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Complete entry form and rules at thisoldhouse.com/shortcuts

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DECORATE
TO
WIN!

House
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PROJECTS

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TESTIMONIALS

TOPICS

VIDEOS

WEEKEND

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ADVERTISING

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Works harder than your average gift card.

This holiday season, you can make every home improvement fan on your list jolly when you give a Home Depot Gift Card. After all, with so many possible fixes and projects to choose from, it's the one gift that can inspire everything from a fresh coat of paint to a fresh perspective on a room. In fact, it's such a great idea that you may want to get one for yourself. So make this holiday special by giving something all home-improvement buffs can appreciate—from the Sunday dabbler to the constant craftsman—a gift card from The Home Depot®. **You can do it. We can help.**



homedepot.com/giftcards

1st Quarter

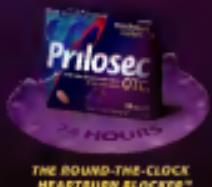
2nd Quarter

3rd Quarter



SOME THINGS KEEP COMING BACK. WITH PRILOSEC OTC, HEARTBURN ISN'T ONE OF THEM.

PriLOSEC OTC is the only over-the-counter heartburn medicine that works to provide 24-hour protection with one pill a day.* It blocks heartburn before it starts, by stopping acid at the source. So heartburn, unlike other annoying things in life, won't keep coming back.



*With PriLOSEC OTC, take as directed for 10 days for treating frequent heartburn. See product label for details. ©2001 P&G/PriLOSEC OTC.

letter FROM THIS OLD HOUSE

The Hoboken Horror

"MAYBE IT'S CURSED" my contractor said with a worried look on his face. He entered my house. We were standing outside looking at the latest problem, a 120-year-old, cast-iron fence that had suddenly begun to snap pieces off itself like you break a stick.

Just one more item in a long list that started the day I bought the place. "It's a disaster zone, a bloody battlefield Texas!" My contractor is Australian, which means he uses words like mate and bloody. In other words he's prone to swearing, profanity, or worse, if a national emergency.

But as I stood there picking off the unfortunate shingles that had happened on the handful of peers I've had on the Threes... on the block, I mean, I almost had to agree.

Torrents of water in the basement. Several times. Torrents of water through the roof. Several times. When sparking and sputtering behind the walls. A never-stopped structural collapse from decades of unseen termite damage. Roofs growing up through the basement floor. Swarms of flying ants that hatch out of nowhere in the spring and fall. "You know what that is?" my contractor said. "It's the bloody Amityville Horror."

I've taken my lumps, too. After a lifetime of insect bites and an infobated onion, DCYing had laid me low with a crimson, a breaking iron, a cracked rib, and a nose so badly fractured I needed half a dozen metal pins to hold the darn thing together. And worse: I've gained 15 pounds, though my wife insists I'm losing weight because I'm eating too many Little Debbie Cheesecake Marshmallows. Besides that, from my eye.

Enter way, the home-improvement thing could make a grown man (or woman) cry. That's also apparent, anyway. Another option: Throwin' myself into the fireplace, though given my luck I'd get stuck just long enough to create a chimney fire, before rolling back out and singeing the carpet.

This leaves only one (otherwise healthy) option to laugh. Which is exactly why we debut, on page 52, the 70th Department of Funny. It's a collection of commerce and home-improvement jokes we like. We hope you'll like them too. Maybe even enough to make your own Amityville feel a bit more like Pleasantville.



The author is fond of the fireplace. He has contemplated throwing himself into it after renovation setbacks.

Torrents of water in the basement.

Wires sparking and sputtering behind the walls. Decades of unseen termite damage. Swarms of flying ants. It's enough to make a grown man cry.

Scott Cimillano

SCOTT CIMILLANO
EDITORIAL

PS: Happy Holidays to you, and, if I may be so bold, I'd like to ask for a present: your story ideas. The best will be used, with all due credit, in our reader-edited issue next June. (Special mention paid to whoever houses hawks for a cure.) You can reach me at scott@houseandhome.com.

mail

Drywall Screws

I just read your item on the many and varied uses of drywall screws ("10 Uses," Around the House, October). They are a great asset, and should be in every toolbox. One word of caution, however: They are brittle and have no ductility. When they fail, they fail suddenly and without warning. They should never be used for any structural purpose.

GERALD O'CONNELL, PHOENIX, ARIZ.

Native Wood vs. Bamboo

I was confused by the mixed "green" messages implied in the October issue of TOH—specifically the promotion of particle board/gauges 32 and 500 as somehow superior to our own woods. The temperate forests of North America produce on a sustainable basis a variety of beautiful species, instead of a few local products. The U.S. has over 800,000 certified tree farms that are independently dedicated landowners with a long-term vision for their forests.

Here in New Hampshire most investments are done on intensive and sustainable bases. The work is accomplished by trained loggers and expert sawyers. Much of the wood is seen directly by sawyers that provide stable jobs and support rural economies. To suggest that our



bamboo which is intensively managed can produce cheap, highly manufactured, and transported bamboo around the world is somehow green. That's a local product to firmly not accurate.

SARAH CROFT, FOREST INDUSTRY SPECIALIST,
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION, DURHAM, N.H.

how to reach us

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The editor's reply: We featured bamboo products in the October issue but did not imply it is greener than other than timbers certified by the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). One of these is the birch of the cabinetry on page 32 was also FSC certified. I apologize, however, a sustainable and greener choice than many non-FSC certified knot-free hardwoods. But your point well taken that "green" represents a complex equation and ultimately what we are sometimes too easily misled.

Kentucky Post Office

I want to thank you for the article "Post Class" (September) and the amazing photographs of the restoration of the post office in my home-

town of Paintsville, Kentucky. I have been there since 1974, but I remember the place well. I walked to it frequently until it was only two-and-a-half blocks from my home on Fourth Street, between the Grahams family lot but not now; however Dr. Sarah is the last person to live there.

BARBARA STAFFORD, WEST COLUMBIA, S.C.

Bulkhead Doors

In the October issue This Old House volume, a homeowner asked for suggestions on replacing rolling bulkhead doors. We had the same issue a few years ago and our carpenter—who knew we wanted a redwood look—simply suggested using PVC bulkhead doors. It's still strong in certain directions so he needed to build an angled internal support frame, but it still looks great about six years later.

MATTHEW CHAPIN, TURTLEBROOK, N.Y.

Fence Adaptation

I just wanted to share a photo of the fence my husband Adam Blasen built while managing a project by the press in "Golf Cart Bag Impact" [April 2007]. It isn't quite finished yet, but I think you will agree that he has done a great job. Keep up the good work of putting out a great magazine and inspiring people to build great things!

MEREDITH HOWELL BY EMAIL



corrections

"Residential Metal Panel Movement" (Around the House, October, 19) What is shown in the lead photo [not] the system manufacturers recommend in the adjacent sidebar. The New York City-based Society of Steel, Marc Reischbach tells us in an email to *Architectural Record*:

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK CITY SOCIETY OF STEEL



Introducing the virtually invisible TruScot® insect screen, with 50% more holes than ever before. The strength of stainless steel you have to not see it to believe it.



Credit: © Andersen Corp.

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participate in ARREST. The New Jersey State Attorney General's Office (AG) will issue a public announcement concerning ARREST, you will receive a memorandum from the AG's office detailing the process and your role in the program. If you are a licensed attorney in New Jersey, you will receive a memorandum from the AG's office detailing the process and your role in the program.

On November 3rd, applications for the Blue Card from American Express OPEN® became available. We're initially releasing 10,000 Cards, and we'll be announcing some of the first members on December 26th during MSNBC's "Your Business." If a Card that offers you the

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around the **HOUSE**

EDITED BY DEBORAH ENGLISH

MORE THAN MERE SHELTER

A team of charitable contractors and volunteers gives families new hope

It was 20 years ago on Christmas Eve that Hesedim Shalom came to a turning point in its life. After starting a poverty-stricken family living in a cramped garage, it says, "It occurred to me that a person without a home is a person without a place to belong." A few years later, with the encouragement of his wife, Amy, Hesedim Industries was born. Dedicated to building, housing for the poorer rebuilding homes in despair and training unskilled people in construction trades like framing, the Rochester, Pennsylvania-based organization teams up with more than 100 churches and small businesses to carry out its work.

The nonsectarian group operates from an 8.5-acre campus with an on-site skills center where staff and volunteers learn about everything from framing and drywall to masonry and window-replacement techniques. Overall, Hesedim has about 100 volunteers for Hesedim's "Mitzvah" projects, in which participants go somewhere to work.

Estimates indicate that Hesedim Industries has finished more than 2,000 projects and provided some \$27 million worth of construction assistance since its founding. "We're tried to do a little bit higher every year," he says. Learn more about how to volunteer at hesedim.org.

—NATALIE ROSENBLUM



ABOVE: Hesedim Industries employees Andy Brown (left) and Steve Fleck (right) work for free to help families in need. Other skilled contractors and volunteers take a break from a building project. From left to right: Jim Gacke, Larry Stover, John Henley, Bob Moyle, Brian, and Fleck.



SPEAKING OF BENEVOLENT BUILDERS...



Global Outreach
Serves 16 states
and 11 countries.
For Hesedim, last fall alone, more than 220,000 hours of volunteer labor—amounting to 100,000 free days—went into 100-plus projects.



Big Need
Serves third of U.S. residents—
about 75 million people—under 100 hours related
problems such as poor-quality shelter,
renovating, and homelessness.



A Healthy Trend
The nonprofit Enterprise Foundation
is spending \$500 million over five
years to build 5,500 affordable,
green houses across the U.S.

around the HOUSE



DESTINATIONS

WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT

Finally you can get yourself inside a house—in one of America's most affluent zip codes. At least for a couple of hours.

The 21st Annual Holiday House Tour in Westport, Connecticut, takes place on Sunday, December 3, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. An hour-and-a-half closer to the Westport Historical Society (the few vehicles involved) and for the holidays houses of varying periods and styles. Including the oldest house in Westport—an early 1700s Shingle style farmhouse—and a 1925 Flanders Tudor Revival on three acres of scenic hilltops. Bonus: Most of the homeowners are art collectors, so painting and sculpture are king this year as much about art as its about architecture. Afterward, for an extra fee, you can徘徊 in a cocktail or have a glass of wine at the featured houses. Tickets are \$35 to \$75; for more information, visit westportholiday.org.

Can't make the tour? Stop by Westport anyway. You could make your holiday shopping in the historic downtown even more distinct or take in a performance of A Christmas Carol at the legendary Wilgfeld Country Playhouse, located inside a converted leather tannery barn. Call 203-227-4177 for tickets. —KEITH PANKOFF

TOP: Traditional winter gift giving doesn't mean for it includes us during the holiday tour. ABOVE: Bring your tools to this weather-proof event at state historical Westport.

ORIGINS ANSWER

Q: INDO Printed at just under 2000 and defined the broad band, the machine could glove through a layer of white powder to create a 17-inch-wide path. Today, similarly sized endloaders can now move three times those rates, but they offer larger tires and remove up to 2000 pounds of snow per minute. [Perfect for clearing the driveway before your last snowfall.]



GETTING SCREWY

NEW DRILLS AND DRIVERS BOAST LIGHTWEIGHT POWER

Sharing screw, design-savvy: This month's drills and drivers boast tools like memory-module flat tools. They're designed by Milwaukee's engineers, which puts as much pressure on their raised carbide tips as on the weight loss. We've been of those carbide-tipped drivers, which are of use and simple. Use them in rock season and punch through holes.

MARITA IMPACT This 72-volt driver has 175 inch-pounds of torque—enough to drive a 7/8-inch bolt. The hopped handles work in the traditional counter-clockwise, or clockwise as for the line (see \$200). milwaukee.com

BLACK & DECKER

DECKORDERS XTD The cordless tool for outdoor high-SHM driving at low-speed, high-torque drilling and driving. The 7-volt battery is blackanddecker.com with eight other SHD products. \$60. blackanddecker.com

MILWAUKEE M18CRAFT

The most powerful of the bunch, the 12-volt driver can drill holes up to 1½ inches wide. It can handle 150 screws in a single charge and recharge in a speedy 30 minutes. \$190. milwaukee.com

—SARAH SAWYERS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE CLOUTIER PAGE 104

The most dangerous place on Earth
is 50,000 feet above it

Photo: Michael J. Murphy

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NEED TO KNOW

PLUGGED IN

Improve your home's safety this Christmas (and cut your electric bills) with master electrician Allen Ballant.

Every time you flip a switch, turn a knob, or plug in an appliance, you take a risk. If your electrical system is safe and functional, that risk is probably very low. But each year faulty wiring causes nearly 50,000 fires and 500 deaths. So take some time before the busy holiday season and follow the simple recommendations of Allen Ballant, a master electrician who's revised several This Old House projects. His eight-point checklist will ensure that you and your house never become part of those statistics.



The three biggest problems I find in houses are no GFCIs where they're supposed to be, ungrounded outlets, and receptacles with reversed polarity."

—ALLEN BALLANT, MINISTER EASY TOHAN

GFCI PRIMER

I often find receptacles where the polarity is reversed when

REPLACE THE RECEPTACLES

These three-prong receptacles merely sit properly grounded, and you can't even tell if they're the right type. If you do, however, the receptacle's wires are not properly grounded. That means the receptacle could be damaged—and you could be electrocuted. (That's why you should never use adapters that allow three-prong receptacles to plug into two-prong receptacles.) Check your receptacles with a plug-in tester. If it indicates that the ground connection is not tight, call an electrician to replace it.

TEST YOUR GFCIs

Lighting or power surges can trip the sensitive circuit-breaker ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). These special receptacles respond by cutting off current flow to the receptacle. To test a GFCI, unplug a night-light and turn it on. Push the GFCI's "test" button; the light should turn off. Now push "reset"; the night light should come on again. If it doesn't, replace the GFCI. Do this last because it might just affect lighting fixtures. The GFCIs in the main service panel are usually the first ones tested. If a night-light trips a GFCI, plug a night-light into the previous receptacle. Then you can locate the faulty receptacle. Then you can fix it yourself.

EXAMINE YOUR EXTENSION CORDS

Overload or over voltage can damage cords, especially the older ones. A good rule of thumb is to keep receptacles at least 12 inches apart. You can never have too many outlets, so never stretch multi-outlet strips of electrical tape. I recommend that you inspect the damaged area in both directions, but if any copper wires are exposed just the coat. Then I recommend under carpet or rug.

Request when the black "hot" wire is spliced to the white terminal. A properly-grounded insulation splice would still work, but there is a chance you'll get a shock on your fingers from the hot wire. You'll need a plug-in tester to check for polarity and load.

EXERCISE YOUR STRENGTH

Standing by a kitchen, basement, or garage, circuit breakers inevitably get jarred around and that forces them to trip. That's why you should always turn off power to the receptacle box and then back on again a year. (Agreeable to the law is that if the switch has been straight-jacketed, when your clock says to be intact, anything it's whether you can't turn back on, call an electrician to replace it.)

LIGHT UP THE HOLIDAYS SAFELY

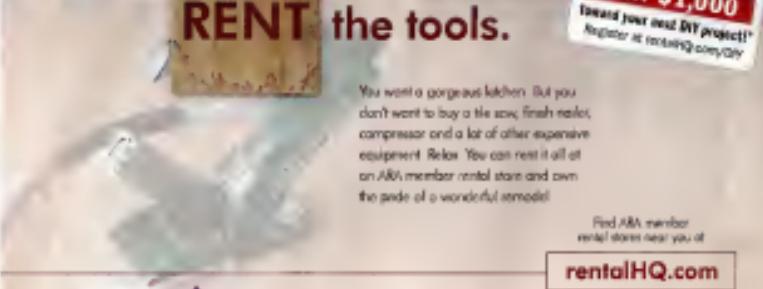
Over your entire garage and front porch, string up to 200 small holiday lights. For outdoor displays, use only exterior-rated extension cords. Use GFCI-protected fuses. Use GFI or step-lights if you want people to see something. And don't support the cords with metal hooks or hangers.

SHUT OFF BILL POWER

"They may be off, but many homes depend on continuous power in standby mode—for the sum of \$1.5 billion of wasted electricity in the U.S. each year." To cut that idea, simply connect your TV cable box, stereo, and other electronic devices to a power strip that readily cuts off when not in use. Motion-sensor timer strips like the ones from Westinghouse automatically turn off after a preset interval (up to 30 minutes) if they detect movement as it's been.

PHOTO BY JEFFREY L. BROWN

OWN the pride.



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You want a gorgeous kitchen. But you don't want to buy a big one, finish nailer, compressor and a lot of other expensive equipment. Relax. You can rent it all at an A&A member rental store and own the pride of a wonderful remodel!

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KITCHEN DESIGN

Problem: The kitchen lacked elbow room, storage space—and charm

Solution: Add an island and a second sink, then zone the space for food prep and cleanup. Here's how >>

BY MARJORIE E. RADE PHOTOGRAPHED BY SARAH ESSER

NICE BUMPING INTO YOU It's a friendly enough greeting, but not when it's happening literally—on your kitchen. For years, Judi and Boudy Adams had to go out of their way to avoid bumping on each other's toes when cooking in their late-Victorian-era home in Niswiler, Tennessee. Blame the layout. With three active doorways, a brick chimney wall, and a floor-to-ceiling window to reckon with, all the kitchen's counters—including the chef cook and head dishwasher—found themselves packed up against the narrow aisle uncommunicatively well.

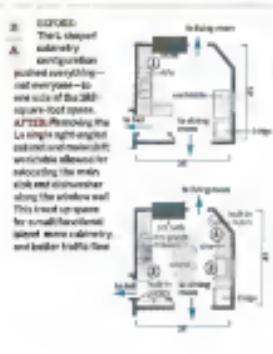
"They have a very efficient division of labor—she does all the cooking and he does all the cleaning," says designer Beth Haley of the couple. "But the kitchen wasn't functioning at that level."

Haley helped improve the flow by reconfiguring the space into distinct stations designed to prep, cooking, and cleanup. By removing a short peninsula and a sideboard, she moved in front of the large window to serve as additional work area, the designer made way for a granite-topped island with a prep well, under-counter storage, and bar stool seating. Period-style mismatch such as galvanized zinc and beadboard combine with four well-coordinated shades of green, gray, and gold paint to create a vintage look. "A little incongruity suits the 'collected' character of old kitchens that were added on as-over time," says Haley of the result. "And any kitchen can benefit from a little extra elbow room."



BEFORE: The white oak cabinets were sturdy but boring, not too few in number to keep work areas clear of clutter. AFTER: A large red island with a built-in sink provides additional storage.





The Plan

» Create balanced workstations by putting space once gobbled up by a table to better use

What They Did

- 1 | **INTERLOCKING EXISTING CABINETS** with new, custom-fitted cupboards by local cabinetmaker Roger Johnson; painting them varying shades of green. This not only stretched the budget, it appears perfectly good now.
- 2 | **REDISIGNING THE LAYOUT** to create a sleek, oriented solution: a stainless steel range, a short, single-surface peninsula that sticks out into the room, and a space for an island with a second sink, storage, and seating.
- 3 | **RELOCATED THE MAIN SINK** to directly in front of the open-kitchen wall, saving distance for a efficient, efficient cleanup station. Now dirty dishes are easily transported to the dishwasher from the adjoining dining room.
- 4 | **VARIED COUNTER HEIGHTS** and surface materials—like the galvanized zinc around the main sink and the海棠木 (mablete) behind the Aga range—to give the kitchen a built-over-time look. Four well-coordinated paint colors blend the old and the new in an effective, unforced fashion.

PHOTO: ROBERT STONE



mix it up

Check out another Kitchen with lots of color at [ThisOldHouse.com](#)

The Details

» Smart storage solutions and better lighting result in a cleaner, brighter workspace

- 1 | **THE CUSTOM WASHSTAND** designed to hold the Ron Hindeley farm-style turned legs with open shelving below for frequently used pots and serving pieces. A zinc countertop and Delta faucet with Mission styling complete its old-world, timeless look.
- 2 | **SLIDE-OUT DRAWERS**, built in the space vacated by the old dresser, keep dryware neatly organized and handy near the range.

- 3 | **A GLASS-FRONT NITCHED** with open brackets, a raised butcher block surface and a beamed backsplash vintage-style to avoid a rigid exterior wall. Painted Benjamin Moore's Venetian Gray, the piece has the look of freestanding furniture and a made-to-measure fit. The Lucent lighting control mounted under the cabinet nicely complements the new lighting scheme installed by homeowner Judson Adams. **Penland** lights recessed ceiling lighting, and dimmable undercabinet track warm up the room, which has only one source of overhead light.

- 4 | **A BENCHESSED BENCH** outside the dining room has shelves up top to display serving pieces. Lengthened doors below serve as pantry space. The paneled green-painted recessed shelving that surrounds the home's doorway.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 162



Help for the Holidays

» 46 great around-the-house gift ideas for the man of leisure, the tool-toter, and everyone in between

BY KEITH PARSONS
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW McCALL

Holiday shopping can be a grim assignment. But it's a whole lot more fun when you put yourself in the shoes of the person you're buying for. Which has passion? What does she need right now to make her life easier? To simplify the task, we've done some of the thinking for you. On the following pages, you'll find dozens of our favorite gift ideas for all the persuasives on your list. There's the Leisure Lover, who'd rather sit back and enjoy the house than work on it. The Proud Parent is geared toward moms, pops, and joneses who like to do projects together. We've also included plenty of gotta-have-'em tools and accessories in our New Homeowner package. And our Garage Guy gallery is packed with ideas for men (and women) who want to take aim at clutter. Now get out there and start shopping.

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hallway.

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9 WHISTLING KIT

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- 1 | DEDICATED KIT:** Help build your kids' skills and build their appreciation for nature at the same time. All you need is a few tools and a spirit of adventure.
- 2 | HOUSE OF CARDS:** Build out the legacy of these plastic cards you had as a kid—now you can actually build it.
- 3 | CRITICAL PENTS FRAME:**

Share and display family photos with this 228-megapixel digital photo booth built to store up to 10,000 shots so you can print them out whenever you want.

4 | CANVAS, PRINTER, AND ICE CAMP CHAIR:

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universal LED color right for your camera. Canon's \$420 printer prints up to 100 pages per minute. It's built to withstand the elements, dry and cold temperatures, and more.

5 | THE WAY THINGS WORK:

Blame the wonky-some head gear you chose at engineering school for this \$10 book.

www.hockney.com

6 | TRADESHOW KIT:

From simple platform designs to heavy-duty displays, these trade show stands are built to last. Plus, they're designed with us in mind to be selected easily. hobbykit.com \$999; geminicards.com \$149.

7 | KIDS TOOLBOX:

Features a 100-piece set of tools, including hammer, tape measure, screwdriver, nail square, and more. \$10-\$149. www.bonanza.com

8 | GARDEN CHAIR:

Available in four styles, this chair is made for the outdoors. It's built to withstand the elements, dry and cold temperatures, and more.

9 | METAL PRIMERS:

This mineral-based paint helps toughen your garage, getting tools and gear up off the floor.

10 | SKI STICKS:

These look like a high-end ski, but are perfect for getting around your garage or workshop. They provide a smooth ride for both rockers and flats. \$29.99. skisticks.com

11 | ROLLING SHELF:

With a top shelf that's 10 inches wide, this rolling shelving unit is great for holding tools, books, and more.

12 | ROLLING CART:

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plus with the bright and airy design, this simple shelving unit will look great in any room.

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- 1 | BIKE RACK:** The easiest place to store your bike is on the garage wall. This vertical storage system holds four bikes and is perfect for bike racks and flats. \$29.99. amazon.com
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6 | ROLLING CART:

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7 | NEEDLEWORK WORKSHOP:

The 8-foot x 10-foot mat, cabinet, and shelves are great when you're working—and the folding legs and bottom shelf give you your garage back when you're done. \$129.99. needlework.com



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Illustrations: Alvarado

3 | DOUBLE LEVEL TwoTools
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a compass to detect level and
stud sensor in its cases. \$25
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2 | TOOL TUBE He has the
usual hardware, sturdy tools, and
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list. \$10 [amazon.com](#)

3 | REMOTE-BEDDING Pro
split and fold-upovers from
a growth-line lighter.

2 | JEWELRY LEVEL TwoTools
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a compass to detect level and
stud sensor in its cases. \$25
[two-tools.com](#)

4 | ROOFER'S BAM This 34
ounce fibreglass roofer's hatchet
works like a dream. \$36
[proffamtoolsusa.com](#)

5 | HAMMERBOOKS The Change
takes on these ameliorating
plying, rewarding tips that
free up your stress
from first walk through.
\$120 [amazon.com](#)

6 | PLUMBER'S TAPE A tiny
roll of pliers and an adjustable
wrench to handle anything under
the sink. \$16
[cooperhandtools.com](#)

7 | STANDBY OUTLET We
exceeded this 25-foot tape
outfit before it turned
so you'll be able to measure
longer lengths. length-tape.com
\$25 [amazon.com](#)

8 | LASER MEASURE Clearing debris? The Laser

laser makes quick work of long
distances, and the range of ours
leaves no estimator unimpressed.
\$25 [fourlevel.com](#)

9 | PAINT SPONGE When
you've got it quick off to do,
use this 100% cotton cloth
over a roller to add texture.
\$10 [amazon.com](#)

10 | HOME PROJECTS Three
great books to take along,
this best seller will fit it all:
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do. \$22 [amazon.com](#)

11 | BARRIER-FREE Holds
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THIS OLD HOUSE MAGAZINE SHOW LOFT 2007

The Ultimate Open-Plan Kitchen

How to turn a makeshift mess into a sleek, one-wall cooking zone ➤

BY KELLY BENNETT

PHOTOGRAPH BY KENNETH CHEN

PRODUCED BY GOULFEE SCARPER

LIKE many homeowners, Sam Lopergola and Ed Wood love having the kitchen in their downstairs. Machines left open to the convenience and safety in the adjacent living areas. In fact, the chance to keep it a walk-open space was the reason the two architects reenvisioned the former garage factory 10 years ago. Sure enough, the clawfoot restaurant-style island and the handsome plywood countertop that runs the length of the kitchen's one wall made it obvious why the cobbled-together cooking zone was the axis of the home—but most often made them cringe. "I wished I could just close a door and deal with the mess long," says Lopergola.

Of course, closing off the kitchen wasn't really an option. So Lopergola spent years mulling over an upgrade. She always envisioned a modern white cabinetry with slab doors but abandoned the idea of stainless steel appliances when she got a look at glass-front, glass-door models from Best-Air. With help from *This Old House* magazine, she settled at the perfect solution: a uniform row of glossy, white-hinged cabinets arranged around a sleek glass-front appliance and fitted with whimsical colored resin resin countertops. Not only would the reflexive surfaces appear cohesive, but they would also be a sleek counterpoint to the left's rougher-textured exposed brick and beams. The majority of the storage would be in deep drawers, the most practical option now that the couple's daughter, Charis, 9, and son, Bennett, 6, were to grab their own after-school snacks. "You won't forces out in the open, her mom says." And you won't chance light throughout the space." Read on to learn what design choices cleared up her kitchen, what worked for her—and how to transform any kitchen with an open plan.



BEFORE: Far left: The couple started the new kitchen—the left—and this makeshift kitchen—the right, since Sam Lopergola was the source of angst.
AFTER: New sleek white-temper cabinets are going into the same site, with plus-size island, keeping that setup made the kitchen operate easier.



Recipe for a Sleek Open Kitchen

A kitchen that looks integrated in a larger open plan requires attention to every detail, however small. Here are some key ingredients

1. START WITH A SIMPLE LAYOUT

The latest kitchen design trend looks the cleanest: So a straight line of cabinetry will need less ironmongery than an L shape, especially if adding an L. Phillips notes an interior wall that intersects bows in the rest of the space. Although Lapergola and Wood—who were chosen when they first designed the kitchen—initially chose zone-wall set-up because it was easier to power and plumb, Lapergola has since learned that this (partly out) has great benefits: it eliminates the cost of building interior walls; it keeps the scene open to members' natural light, and it enhances the kitchen's social flow. "This way it is literally the heart of the home," she says.

2. MINIMIZE UPPER CABINETS

Of course, removing upper cabinets can save you money. But it helps when you can't mount heavy kitchen cabinets directly on sturdy decked backs and ceilings are 10 or 12 feet high, there are other reasons to remove them:

Probably the biggest downside to upper cabinet-free is the time and cost it takes to prep the walls to hold them. In itself, for example, the

original back wall sits 12 inches behind drywall that conceals the kitchen slopes. The wallboard alone could not support the two 24-inch deep cabinets Lapergola wanted over the oven and range. Below each of them—and a smaller, 12-inch deep cabinet, above the sink—could be built-in deep cabinet Patrick McCormick had to cut small sections of drywall; then screw plywood panels or "grids" to the back side of it between the stud stacks. The grinds reinforce drywall, giving them something solid when he could fasten the side mounting plate. A lot of people make a big mistake relying on a string of toggle bolts to mount cabinetry on drywall, which doesn't hold up to 100 pounds."

Lapergola concentrates on much storage in the cooktop area since a 24-inch deep drawer filled with silverware is the new 3-by-8-foot silent. "Opening drawers subdues noise" than having to reach toward the ceiling," she says.

3. MAXIMIZE REFLECTIVE SURFACES

A lot's brittle: Industrial elements, including brick walls and cement or travertine floors;



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make adding an unusual amount of sheen, as Lopergola did, rock-bottomed instead of over the top. Here to the left is another surfaces: the high-gloss, lacquered Butcher cabinet appears reflect not stark. The inlayed surface is a process of heat curing; the paint after it's sprayed and then hot, polishing the cabinet exterior delivers a more reflective surface than enamel paint alone. John, like a Reading Glass, appliances can turn the frosty look on the Edge, dishwasher, or cooktop, and oven, which is covered with a layer of translucent white glass.

4 | FINE-TUNE ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING

Adding warm and cool light in one area, or in a single fixture as in way lighting designs, appropriate natural light colors. That's important in this case, where the kitchen becomes day light from the open-plan windowed living area. To wash the island in white, the built-in "backlit light," warmest light that is bright enough to work under. Lopergola took advantage of a pair of low-hacket, dove-shaped luminaires to carry fixtures throughout the loft space. Fitting each with two compact fluorescent and three incandescent bulbs, their combined effect by a single row of adjustable height. Recessed lights screwed into \$4 porcelain soffits between the fixtures and the vent hoods.

5 | CLEAR THE DECKS

As an open-kitchen needs less counts. Here, building the island from the same glossy white lacquered cabinetry, uncluttered the kitchen the dining table and front door. Beneath the sink, one drawer holds garbage and recycling bins; over the table, the wall-mounted cabinet is made specifically to remove a dish-drying rack and drop pan, helping to keep the highly visible counter-top clear. And some streamlining from kitchen upgrading sample. Don't vent hoods, for instance, cool and recirculate cooking vapors, eliminating the need to add ductwork. Moving the cooktop is the island would have meant removing the power load, under the original briscoe Boer—a one-with total cost of about \$12,000.

6 | KEEP APPLIANCES, CABINET DOORS, AND DRAWERS FLUSH

Don't underestimate the power of an even plane of surfaces to polish up any kitchen. That's why Lopergola took great pains to achieve that look at her workstation. Her main reason for scaling back



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY L. HARRIS
Left: Drop cabinets over the refrigerator and wall oven was as they fit into the deep soffit above. An integrated look with the doors on the appliances. That meant the crew had to arm themselves to build a 3-inch recess in the drywall behind the range so it could be pushed back against the doors and easily lined up. "People like to imagine how a cooktop will look here," says. But when really looks at a kitchen, how it integrates everything looks from the side," says Lopergola. Her own kitchen now presents a clean, less cluttered, airy profile—just as she envisioned it. ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY L. HARRIS
Left: Reflective surfaces brighter up the open plan kitchen, which receives natural light through a windowed corner. A cabinet over the sink holds a dish-drying rack and drop pan. Lopergola highlights the Butcher cabinet's lacquered finish with a built-in vent hood, which minimizes heat rather than venting to the outside. www.hgtv.com/kitchens www.hgtv.com/diy

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A The term "hard water" was originally used to describe water that was difficult or hard to work with. Today, it's a problem that affects 85 percent of U.S. households according to the U.S. Geological Survey, and many homeowners feel its effects without even realizing it.

Naturally occurring minerals in hard water leave deposits on plumbing fixtures and appliances like washing machines, dishwashers, and water heaters. If left untreated, these deposits can eventually clog your pipes and appliances, reducing the efficiency of the equipment and even shortening its life. Many of these problems are hidden from homeowners until some type of malfunction occurs in your plumbing system or with your appliances. The bottom line is that hard water can hurt you where it hurts the most—in the pocketbook.

Q What can I do to minimize the impact of hard water?

A A water softener removes the less desirable minerals in hard water inside a water softener tank, with a need to change thousands of tiny resin beads. As hard water moves over the beads, hard mineral ions are removed, creating soft water.

Q Why is soft water better?

A Soft water increases the life expectancy and efficiency of your plumbing systems and many appliances by removing many hard minerals from your water. A study by the American Water Works Association found that washing machines using hard water can wear out up to 30 percent faster than those using soft water. In addition, according to the Virginia Competitive Enterprise soft water helps increase heating efficiencies up to 26 percent when heating water, and up to 22 percent when heating with electricity.

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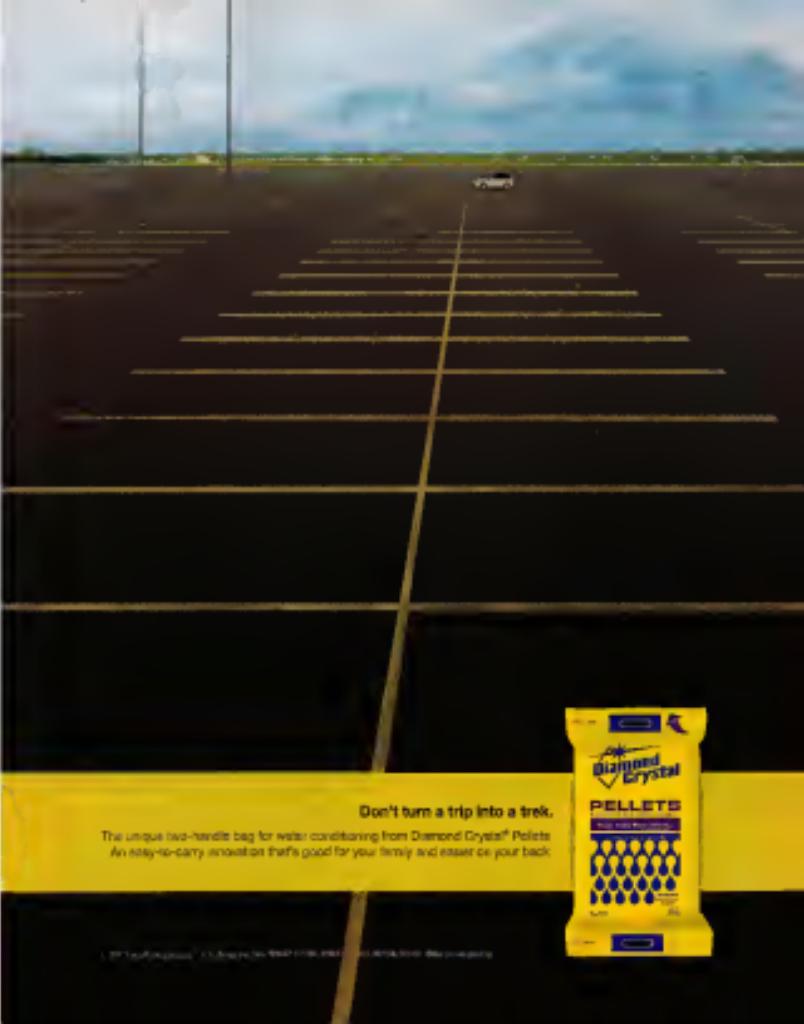
- Special needs:** Different geographic areas contend with different water problems, and individual needs vary. For example, if iron or rust is a problem in your home, choose Diamond Crystal® Rust-Out® pellets, which contain the same ingredients as standard Diamond Crystal® pellets with an anti-fouling additive to remove iron- or manganese, water tanks and other household fixtures. For people on a sodium-restricted diet, the Diamond Crystal® Saltless offers potassium chloride pellets that give you a great alternative with taste tank residue.



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Unleashing My Inner Scrooge

» What is it about Christmas that makes people want to do bizarre things to their houses?

BY JOHN MARCHESI
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SUSIE BLODGETT

NO DOUBT I HAD I Hammered in the last finish nail, and spent on the final coat of paint after a two-year renovation that I was faced with a tough decision: Should I now cover the Cape Cod I had lovingly restored with a batch of gaudy lights and plastic reindeer?

Christmas was coming, the time when homeowners across the land down under money, good taste, and allusion of proportion would to flaunt their houses and yards with 9-foot tall inflatable snowmen and strings of light resembling ribbons in the shape of elves. Last year, Americans spent about \$9.3 billion dollars on Christmas decorations. You heard right, that's billion—which doesn't go far when purchasing weapons systems but can certainly fill a few shopping carts.

eastward blinding lights and plastic reindeer. For that kind of money, more than five and a half million homeowners could afford their very own motorcycle-riding LED-Santa, which cost for a mere \$1,000 each.

The choice of whether or not to decorate this house, my first, was fraught with something family dynamics. The renovation work was done almost completely by a two-man team—me and my father. Luckily, my father, who was a grumpy hoarder about memory storage, included Christmas on that list. Enter my mother. Since I was single at the time, she was sorta what the perceived as a funlime soul. I had really spent enough during the renovation breaking off her suggestions for curtains and paint colors. There, of course,

gained, she tested a new opening.

"I have some extra Christmas lights," she announced casually.

"I think I'll strip lights," I told her.

The next time she came to help, she brought four boxes of multifaceted baubles. The next night, Santa candle. Then an artificial pine bough wreath with a red satin bow. Then candlelit rock candy. It wasn't Christmas yet, and my basement was starting to look like the local Yule Order.

I was well aware that my mother was a dime-store idiot. She filled her house with gaudy Hallmark, St. Patrick's Day, Valentine's Day. She wasn't alone there. The same marketing company that makes Christmas sales reports that homeowners spend another \$10 billion on other holiday decorations. If products were available, my mother would decorate for Guy Fawkes Day. But, of course, Christmas was the big event—the Super Bowl of stuff.

I didn't want to be a Scrooge. Somewhere inside, I couldn't help but feel a fuzzy nostalgia for the Channing of my youth, when nearly every horizontal surface in our house was covered with a Santa, reindeer, or elf and it was my matly task to switch on the series of lights that wrapped across the linear porch. Back then, outdoor lighting was simple and big, like the old vacuum tubes in stereo equipment. A bulb burned out, you got on the step ladder and replaced it. I can remember a day when blinding lights seemed like an lava volcano worthy of NASA.

Now you can buy an automated display of Santa taking a golf put (SL-371-40 from Best Idea Decorating in Omaha, Nebraska), and I have witnessed firsthand a compact-camera-sized light show on a house in Texas that was a fast approximation of the scene in *Close Encounters* when the mother ship arrives—all of it synchronized to holiday music that the homeowners were broadcasting on your car radio.

That, of course, is the danger when you go down the road of display. It can easily tip to excess, a sort of LED arms race where it's not just about keeping up with the Joneses, it's about temporarily blinding others and causing the most kind of anxiety that people give to certain Japanese caravans.

In my newly renovated house, Thanksgiving had come and gone, and I was starting to feel the pressure. I'd already spent a miserable Saturday morning cleaning up and down a ladder, scraping off handfuls of burnt and past needles from my gutters. The idea of scolding our cat ladder against string lights seemed the mostine approach to me about as much as riding the muddy stash at my unchartedopic park.

There had to be some compromise, a way to show that I wasn't a Yulende wet blanket while at the same time keeping my cat off the ground and keeping the number of consumption cords I owned nearly at the double digits. In the end, I found a few boxes of deep blue lights at an estate—because why the but we wanted deep blue lights for Christmas?—and twisted them around the two staircase risers that flank my

swell front porch. I took my mother's pine bough and red ribbon wreath on the front door. Hanging another wreath with white lights in the front picture window and plugged it into a timer. Keeping the results from the rest, I felt better, yet more. Saving the details for the real, I felt better, yet more. Yet more. I went inside and found myself a celebratory eggnog.

When the sun set, my mother pointed and I looked "ace," marvaled at the way he lay down to my classic hits of winter acknowledgement. By the time the next holiday season rolled around, I had a new girlfriend, who became my friend before the next Christmas. When she gave up her apartment to me

I have witnessed firsthand a computer-controlled light show on a house in Texas that was a fair approximation of that scene in *Close Encounters* when the mother ship arrives.



could live together, I found two boxes of holiday decorations along her wall on moving day—Santabear—I can't imagine how this happened—they were left behind on the curb. ■

John Marchesi is the author of *Reservoirs: A Fisher and King Beyond a House and Redress Each Other*. His last book is *The Violin Maker: Finding a Composer Old Tradition in a Brooklyn Workshop*.



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TOOLBOX

Bit Kits

» Drill it, drive it, store it:
How a good set can get
your bits organized

BY HARRY SAWYERS

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW MCGRATH

SOME YOU'VE GOT A SYSTEM. The driving bits go in the hole-dodger jam, spudger go in the collar case, and drill bits are tucked up ready in the magazine tube. It works well enough, as long as you remember the Phillips bits are made "starred pens."

But there's a better way to organize all the disparate bits you need to run screws and drill holes. None better, in fact, as you can see on the following pages. These sleek stepped or wings locking cases make each piece fit its designated spot, protecting it from being dinged, dented, or lost. Some holders are ready to be stored in the toolbox at a moment's notice. Others, larger ones are stored in six-inch-deep shelves, where they hold stacks of useful drill accessories just waiting for that day when you finally need a 3/8-inch bit or have to remove a 12-millimeter nut.

With the right bits, your days of searching bit by bit through the Gorilla's jam will finally be behind you. And you'll never have to worry about losing Torx bits in your belly.

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the Quantum bit kit begins with 100 shifting multitool bits, all precision ball-bit sets, and elements of "torx" and self-shrinking bolts follow up in more than 100 inches of shelf space.
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1. Drill Bit Holder When you open this lid on this sturdy steel case, 20 bits slide into three rows of holes, clearly displaying their sizes. Plus, it has a place to keep them sharp and clean. Plus, you'll know exactly where to look next time you need to drill $\frac{1}{8}$ inch wider than already.

2. Short Augers Most augers come pre-drilled individually but these single-blade ones are just 4 inches long, so they'll easily fit into the slots of a storage tray. Measures 12 x 10 x 2 inches. Price: \$10. Available at [Lowes.com](#). For more information, call 800-338-3535.

3. Steals in the Round This has pieces of what looks like metal hardware and the marketing material—here to get rewarded after the install. With this 20-piece 12 x 12 x 2-inch tray, everything has its place. Price: \$14. Available at [HomeDepot.com](#). Use these tools to drill $\frac{1}{8}$ to 1/2-inch quick holes for wires and pipes or hang and the像在墙上。Price: \$20. Available at [Lowes.com](#).

4. Threaded Spades This 16-piece干涉接頭 storage pouch holds flat bits and drill messages to hold 13 speed bits, a spring bit, and other tools. With this 12-inch 12 x 12 x 2-inch tray, everything has its place. Price: \$14. Available at [HomeDepot.com](#). Use these tools to drill $\frac{1}{8}$ to 1/2-inch quick holes for plumping or once-in-a-lifetime projects with less effort than ordinary spudgers. \$20. Available at [Lowes.com](#).

Photo: iStockphoto.com



Drivers
Spring loaded quick change drivers let you swap out hexagonal bits as needed, and they won't slip at high-torque turns. This handy time-saving feature, common on impact drivers, has upped the popularity of hex shank bit sets, giving you more drilling and fastening options than ever.

1. Roll and Go This compact, easy-to-fold polyester tool bag expands to display 100 drivers, bits, and other tools. It's the right place to store your drill even when out of juice. Price: \$10—a main \$30—comes with over 100 bits and a roll-up and removable eyeglass case.

2. Drill It and Fill It Unlocking the soft fabric holder reveals a shoulder or driving rigs. But the real standout in this case are the two containers: Vicks (for the liquids used for cleaning paint brushes), and the tapered little bottle for oil. Every part is designed to fit perfectly, so you can open them up to a cushion-hump-like plastic case about the size of a church hymnal. There's even an interior bit tray. Price: \$12. Available at [HobbyLobby.com](#).

3. Compact Case One of the most useful items in our toolbox we've covered—and certainly in new-style cases, there are few that do it better. The Pack, a plastic bit holder (bit holder) keeps the bits in place by magnets. Meaning the case holds the bits in place without having to take them out. A sliding sleeve (SAC) slips over the tapered bit tray so you can drill, drive, and repeat without ever touching the drill itself. Price: \$12. Available at [HobbyLobby.com](#).

4. Bit Pouch One of the most useful items in our toolbox we've covered—and certainly in new-style cases, there are few that do it better. The Pack, a plastic bit holder (bit holder) keeps the bits in place by magnets. Meaning the case holds the bits in place without having to take them out. A sliding sleeve (SAC) slips over the tapered bit tray so you can drill, drive, and repeat without ever touching the drill itself. Price: \$12. Available at [HobbyLobby.com](#).

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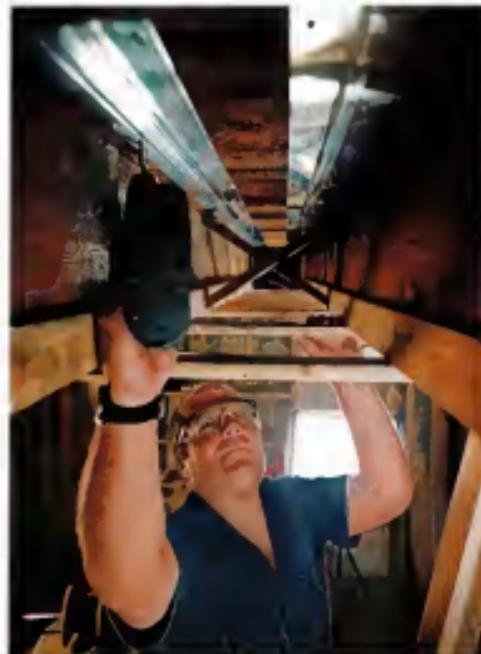


FROM THE TOH TV JOB SITE

Retrofitting Radiant

» Installing water-filled tubing underfoot to heat a room requires some creativity when the flooring's already in place

BY JEFFREY MCKEEON
PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD KARLINSKI



LOOPSTOPS WHITE PLASTIC TUBING hangs suspended like hairpins in the basement of Madeline Krause and Ted Friedberg's Bungalow-style home, the site of This Old House TV's current project. Richard Tschirhart, TOH's plumbing and heating expert, pulls another length of tubing from a ductile on the basement floor and feeds it to his heating contractor, John Perry, who makes it along a joist lay-over his head. Richard steps onto a ladder and gently signs the duct when he sees the presence of aluminum tracks scarred across the wood. "We're running the entire first floor of this house out a great distance," he says. "You'll never feel cold when you walk through, and you won't need slippers, either."

Richard is working with Perry to bring hydronic radiant heat into a 111-year-old house. If you've ever warmed yourself in front of an open fire, you've experienced radiant heat. Unlike moving hot air, radiant heat moves in all directions, warming objects around it. Delivered via warm water in plastic tubing installed in a floor, radiant moves air from below, making the room feel warm and comfortable.

Though installing a radiant system can run up to 90 percent more than, for example, conventional forced-air heat, it saves 30 percent in energy costs, critics say paying for itself. Putting it into new

Richard Tschirhart installs aluminum tracks into a joist bay at the TOH TV project house. The tracks will pull heat from water meter into the radiant tubing between the dining room floor above



ABOVE: Richard installs the PEX tubing to heating contractor John Perry who guides the team past the rough-in stage of framing all four floors of the 3,000-sq-ft house. **MIDDLE:** Perry connects the first-floor manifold to the PEX tube via stainless steel crimp. **BELOW:** He measures the tube lengths to completely insulate it.



construction is typical wood joists screwed to the joists double as subflooring. But retrofitting the tubing under an existing floor presents challenges. If a room is ganged down to the joists, it's easy enough to lay down the pex tubes. But that's not possible where flooring sits atop.

Here's a look at the three most popular places for retrofitting radiant and how the pros do, in each case, to bring cozy warmth to older houses.

IN FIRST-FLOOR LIVING SPACES

The best way to retrofit radiant without disturbing an existing floor is to do it from below, against the underside of the subfloor. In most houses, the only place to do this is on a first floor where your joys are open to the space

below. It can go under most existing floorings, including wood, tile, vinyl, and tiles over.

The retrofit starts with aluminum tracks screwed between the joists, which hold PEX (cross-linked polyethylene) tubing carrying barewater. "Plastic like PEX is not a good conductor of heat," says Richard. "So the aluminum acts like the heat sink and conducts it to the solution." The tracks keep the tubing evenly spaced at 10 inches on center and open. The tubing makes nooks required down low to bay through bays defined at least 2 inches from the edges of each joist. In a kitchen or laundry room, though, Richard takes care not to run it under cabinets or other fixtures. "You don't want to trap the heat under a sealed box," he explains.

Insulation beneath the tubing is critical to keeping the heat moving up into the floor, rather than dissipating away which was the case at the project house, the crew will spray foam insulation over the tubing between the joists, forming a tight seal.

A radiant system needs a hot-water feed and a return connection between the tubing and the plumbing; walls pump to move the water from one to the other. In a four-floor install, all three either already have or are easy to locate now.

The TOH project house has a manifold on the basement where all the tubing originates and returns. It contains its own circulator pump. Each room's tubing feeds into the manifold supply loop around under the floor, and recesses at the return. Every room or zone has a separate thermostat, turning it up sends warm water to the room, raising the room temperature. Turning it down cools the water off.

The manifold goes to hot water from the boiler, which has a special mixing valve that set to deliver water at no higher than 140 degrees F. This limit, explains Richard, means that the floor's surface doesn't rise above 85 degrees, which can break down tile surfaces and warp wood. At the project house, the temperature in the tubing will rise and fall with the weather—ranging between 85 and 100 degrees on winter's cold days and as high as 130 or 140 on the coldest days.

IN SECOND-FLOOR BATHROOMS AND BEDROOMS

Retrofitting radiant on a second floor, where the comfort zone is between tiles or wood flooring underlaid here for a zone, can be trickier. Hardly a there room to second-floor joists from below, so the ceiling is just above. This could add from 10 to 15 inches to the floor grade, says Richard, requiring adjustments, such as raising or cutting down doors. Thick insulation also applies to a first floor with no basement. Seal a leak, for example, you might find that raising the floor doesn't put a defrost line in place.

Fortunately there are products—Upstand's Quik-Tite, Viega Climate Panel, and Rehau's Raupel—some—that

allow bypassing PEX tubing along a room's perimeter. Richard attaches one end to the manifold's return side. If the manifold is at mesh height, you can add a regulating valve in the manifold to regulate water flow to that area.

keep the added height below 5 inches. According to Rehau project manager John Kembel, these panels come over most any substrate—planks, plywood, Gyp, or even concrete—as long as it's level and no sound deadens.

Once the panels are installed or screwed down, you can cover them with a variety of finish floors. Because this gives up their heat quickly, they're ideal for radiant heat—so a bathroom is a good place for a towel. Flooring: a tile floor includes locker board, drywall, and sheathing, so it will add more height to the room than, say, linoleum, which goes down over 3/4-inch plywood, or wood, which can be laid right over the panels (allowing a nailer/driver to nail through the subfloor).

That said, just about any conventional floor covering will accommodate radiant: the wood floors, such as hickory, mesquite woods like oak, ash, or maple. "The narrower the plank, the better," he says. "It keeps expansion and contraction in a minimum." Carpeting will also work, as long as the saturated insulating value for the carpet and pad—insulation carpet design or radiant consumers should have—doesn't exceed 2.2 E. "This floor is too well insulated," says Richard, "so I like putting a cover over it on a radiator."

Connecting a second-floor radiant system to the heat source is just a matter of finding a way to get the water from the boiler, basically, whenever PEX tubes can be installed, radiant heat can too. Richard uses a manifold containing a circulator (in a closet, or tucked away in a cavity—close to the area being heated). The system making multiple lengths of tubing down to radiators in distant manifold. Then a single line can supply the water lines to the boiler in the manifold.

IN A FINISHED BASEMENT

"Any basement that will have a family room, playroom, or workshop should have radiant," says Richard. If the basement will get a concrete slab, the PEX can go down before



the pour, attached to a wire mesh or clipped onto expanded-foam insulation. The flooring then goes right on top of this slab.

If there's already a slab in place, the tubing goes over it, using the same low-profile panels used for a second-floor retrofit. Then you can finish the flooring in the same way you would on a second floor, or you can pour lightweight concrete over the panel. "Covering the tubing with lightweight concrete or gypsum concrete allows it to heat to be absorbed by the concrete's thermal mass. It also protects the tubing, but it raises the finished floor height," says Richard. "So you'll need to adjust every door opening."

In the end, the Newton homeowners decided to put the radiant under the entire first floor and under a second-floor bathroom, but not all of the bathroom. The installation will add to the cost of a piping their heating system, but in the cold Northeast climate they'll see savings in the first energy bill of the winter. However, says Richard, money may payback a bit real quick what radiant's all about. "There's no question that it's the most efficient way to heat and has the lowest operating costs," he says. "But the main reason you do it is for everyday comfort." ■

The electric alternative

Generally electric radiant—either cables installed in the floor or thin mats of resistance wire encased in fiberglass—when it's retrofitted in single rooms rather than whole houses, it's faster and less expensive to install, and it makes a good retrofit for a bathroom, say a small dressing room, that TOH's Richard thinks are doesn't recommend electric radiant for larger spaces, like a kitchen or a finished basement. "With the high-cost per-kilowatt hour, it has a great principal heating source—particularly in cold climates," says Richard. "Hydronic radiant is so efficient because it uses water to transfer heat throughout the building. And water is the ultimate transfer medium. Period."

online bonus

See bonus images of the "TOH's Basement Project" in the online version of this issue at www.familyhandyman.com/bonus.



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Tiling a Hearth

BY HALEY SHAPIRO
PHOTOGRAPHED BY SCOTT SMITH

IT'S NOT THAT THE WINTER always gets all the attention. Sure, it features the great deals, the coziest logs—it's the fire around the fires. But research comes and goes. It's the hearth that's always been there, an intimate brother between the fire and the day-to-day, destination of the glacial heights used by vacuous baby boomers to decrease the floor outside.

So now that you've pulled up that shag carpet since those new headboards, think about updating the fireplace as well. Deck the woots and scratchy stockings and don't be afraid to look at it for decades and just tuck up with some colorful new tiles. At This Old House, insulation advisor Mark Fornes shows in the following pages, you can change the whole look of a fireplace—and the room—in one or two weekends. Then, when you're finished, you'll be able to truly say that the hearth, above, goes on.

Find tile at Kellwell Gray Stone Mosaic Tile, 800/367-9423, www.kellwellgray.com.

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TIME:
Deep digging & tiling one

DIFFICULTY:
Difficult. Requires eye
for symmetry and some
diploma under breast.

TOOLS FOR THIS PROJECT

- UTILITY KNIFE
- CLOTH OR SPONGE WITH MILK AND VINEGAR
- MITER CUTTING TOOL AND SAW
- LEVEL
- 4-FOOT LEVEL
- PLUM LINE
- RUBBER GROUT FLOAT
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• RUBBER GROUT FLOAT

• GROUT SPOON



HOMEOWNER'S HANDBOOK



Tile a Hearth in Six Easy Steps

Unfold the page for tips on upgrading your fireplace and choosing the right tile for your home's look ➤➤➤

More Step-by-Step Online

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HOMEOWNER'S HANDBOOK

REPAIR PROJECTS

overview

Because a hearth is in front of a major focal point, you want it to appear symmetrical. If you're working with high-end tiles, you may lack. Manufacturers or dealers will often create a layout for you if you order the proper amount of materials, in sizes that require a minimum of cutting. But more often you'll need to play around with tile placement and pattern to make sure it looks even, neat, and aesthetically pleasing.

Before the final design is put in place, however, the structure needs to be sound, because a hearth receives constant abuse. A lot of that starts with the substrate, which should be even and level. "Just like any good foundation, if the foundation is true, the rest will follow," says tile contractor Joe Fernandes, who has worked on several This Old House TV projects. If the furnace has a concrete slab, you may need to smooth it out with a skid load of dirt after removing the old hearth. Newer houses, on the other hand, may have a plywood subfloor under the old tiles. To create a noncombustible substrate for the tiles you'll need to put down a layer of combustible fiberboard. You'll also have to store the hearth dimensions up to code. Most localities require hearths to be 18 inches deep and extend 8 inches beyond the edges of the fireplace.

Once you have a good base, for the tiles it's important to attach them to the substrate with thinset, not tile mastic, which can't hold up to the heat of a fireplace. But before you put the tiles down, take the time to perfect a dry-run version of your design. Try different configurations and patterns—a 3-by-6-inch subway tile, for example, lends itself to a running bond pattern—plus square tiles that might look best in a grid—and make sure everything fits well, with even joints. "There's no such thing as 'checkbox too much,'" says Fernandes. Then, as you set the tile, work slowly and deliberately to stick to your design.

Tiling can be time-consuming, but the great thing about a hearth is that it's essentially a flat rectangle. You have room to play around—with different borders, with different patterns. And the best part is that tiling is very forgiving. As long as it's wet, you can always pick it up a little and redo your work, making sure that all the puzzle pieces fit together perfectly.

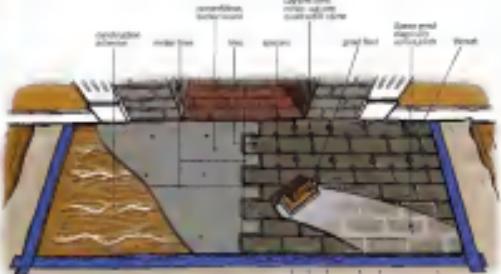


ILLUSTRATION BY GREGORY HENRY

shopping list

- 1. TILES** Available from tiles and home centers, tile contractors, and the internet, this product is as much as the project budget allows. You can buy the most expensive materials for \$200 (most \$100) per square foot for the most elaborate tiling or \$10 per square foot for tiles with a soft, mottled appearance. Some tile dealers will calculate the cost per square foot, and tile manufacturers may offer you all the tile size options in order to accommodate different dimensions. Determine the square footage required. Multiply the length in inches by the width and divide the resulting total by 120. Then add 10 percent to that number for waste tiles.
- 2. 1 1/2-INCH CEMENT-OR FIBER-CEMENT BACKER BOARD** It's easier to lay a plywood subfloor and create what's called a concrete foundation.

- 3. CONSTRUCTION ADHESIVE** In-gel hot-melt or thin-set.
- 4. 1 1/2-INCH BACKER-BOARD SCREWS** Secure the backer board to the substrate.
- 5. UNMILLED THINSET MORTAR** This known as setting cement. One 50-pound bag should be enough. Be sure you use mortars that contain latex; if you don't, it can melt in the heat.
- 6. LATENT ADDITIVE** Known as thinset, as the name implies. Thinset is thin and flexible, so it can withstand a wider temperature range.

- 7. TILE SPACERS** Plastic spacers help to keep your tiles even. While ceramic tiles can be 1/8 to 1/4 inch apart, some tiles can be spaced 1/4 inch apart. Hand-grade tiles may require special surface spacers that accommodate irregularities on the top edge. Buy spacers appropriate for your tile type and the grout lines you intend to use.
- 8. GROUT** Use a thin-set grout if the space between your tiles will be greater than 1/8 inch; otherwise it's easier to use a thin-set grout to ensure a closely matched tile fit.

- 9. SANDED ACRYLIC CAULK** Ideally, seal the grout to prevent water infiltration.

step by step

Prepare the substrate

If the hearth rests on a concrete slab substrate, make sure it's clean and smooth. If not, mix a small batch of Hearst mortar with thinset adhesive following the directions on the packaging. Use the unsmooth edge of a trowel to create a 1/8-inch-thick mortar bed atop the concrete to 1/8 inches and smooth the surface. Allow to dry for four hours before continuing.

If the substrate is plywood, measure the area. Transfer the measurements to a sheet of backer board. Using a utility knife, score the board along the marks. Stand the board on end and snap along the score line. Then cut through the fibers of the snap line.

But the board to the plywood with construction adhesive (RIGHT). Using a drill/driver, screw the backer board down with fasteners (placed every 12 to 16 inches). Fill the screw holes with thin-set.

Before you begin, protect the finished floor around the hearth with plastic sheeting and painter's tape.

TIP

Dry-fit the tile

Measure the opening behind the hearth and determine its center point. Enclose the location of the hearth and draw a circle on the substrate, basing it on the center point. Use a compass to draw a circle on the tile. Then find the center of the hearth (at its back) and draw another line through the center point parallel to the first, so that the two intersect at a quadrant.

Starting at the front edge of the hearth, dry-lay a line of tiles onto the quadrant, beginning at the center line and moving out to the edge (left). Make sure to leave spaces between the tiles. In account for闹, mark major tiles that need to be cut. Many cuts would create a tile less than 1/4 inch, so check the great lines to absorb this measurement rather than use a backsaw.

Continue laying tiles around until you reach the center front-to-back (below). If the pattern you've determined won't work for this layout, it's better to extend the line in a new direction to the left or right.

Dry-lay lines of tiles across until you fill that whole quadrant. Mark tiles at the back edge for cuts. If necessary, once you have a satisfactory layout, transfer all the tiles, in order, to a clipboard to keep track of where they go.

TIP

Once you have a satisfactory layout, transfer all the tiles, in order, to a clipboard to keep track of where they go.

3

Cut the tiles

Align the tiles with the tile saw's blade. Adjust the fence so you can press the tile securely against it with the miter and blade visible. Wearing eye and ear protection, turn on the saw, then raise a blade and the water supply. Run the tile against the fence and water flowing over the blade slowly feed the tile into the blade with light pressure (RIGHT).



{ buying guide }

Designer tile is a great material for a hearth, but it's not always the appropriate one. Fortunately, there are many other砌筑 products that work well for fireplace construction. From natural stone to ceramic tiles to slate, and they are all installed using the same methods shown here. The only limitation is that they must be able to stand the heat (and a dripped log every now and then). Here are a few stylish alternatives to the tile shown in our step-by-step:

Marble

Ambrosia, \$45.75/
square foot
walkerscarr.com



ONLINE BONUS

Click on each tile for fireplaces, and you'll get step-by-step instructions for installing each. [Walkers Carr](http://walkerscarr.com)
[Ambrosia](http://ambrosia.com)

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Slate

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ambrosia.com

Travertine

Dura Travertine, \$10.35/
walkerscarr.com



\$100/m² per square foot

PHOTO: JACOB LINDNER

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 102

4 Set the tile

In a clean bucket, combine dry thinset mastic with additive, following the proportions on the packaging. Using a 1/4-in. Notch Trowel, spread a thin layer, slowly combining the ingredients until the mix is thick enough to stick to a trowel (about 1/8 in.)

Using the stiff grit edges of the trowel, spread a layer of thinset onto one quadrant of the tile. In other words, you can still see your layout lines. Turn the tile around in the notchable layer, and holding it at an angle, scrape edges into the thinset (PAGE 7).

Set a tile at the intersection of the layout lines, giving it a slight twist as you embed it into the thinset (LEFT). Continue working outward from the center toward the edges, placing tiles according to the layout you determined earlier.

TIP > **Set the tiles** quickly pulling up a tile and turning it over; the edges should spread and stick to the back of the tile without being too wavy.

10

Fill out the field

Set the rest of the field tiles, one quadrant at a time. Work outward from the center and fill in the entire field before adding the cut tiles in the corners (PAGE 11). Use spacers between the tiles to maintain even gaps for the grout.

Once you've completed a quadrant, check the tiles with a level or the gridlines. Make sure the pieces are set on an even plane. If a tile is too low, pry it up and butter the back with thinset to raise it. If a tile is too high, gently push it downward with a masonry tamper to create a depression.

Fill in the edge tiles last, and make sure all grout spaces look even and straight.

11

Once spread out, thinset has a working time of about 30 minutes, so finish your installation as soon as possible.

6 Grout the joints

Using a grout sponge and/or a putty knife, clean out any joints where the thinset has squeezed out. Once the tiles are flat, clean and evenly spaced, leave the thinset to dry for 24 hours. Remove the spacers.

Following the directions on the packaging, mix the grout with water until it resembles peanut butter. Using a grout float held at an angle, spread a layer of grout diagonally across the joints, pushing the mix between the tiles (PAGE 7). Walk like a float in all directions to ensure all the joints are full; never sweep it parallel to the joints or it will clog the sponges and pull up the mix. Do not grout the joint around the edge of the hearth.

Once the joints are well packed, sum the Boston edge and again sweeping diagonally across the joints to remove excess grout. Let the grout dry for 30 to 60 minutes, until firm to the touch.

Demolish a small sponge and squeeze out the excess water. Wipe the surface of the tiles (no cleaner needed) to clean off the excess grout. Once the tiles look fully grouted, leave the grout "slightly overnight," until it has hardened on the tiles. Then, using a clean, dry rag, buff off the hearth.

Fill the joint around the perimeter of the hearth with caulk that matches the grout. Smooth the caulk with a wet finger. Allow the hearth to set for another two or three days before installing a fire.

12

5



CIRCA 1785

A STARTER HOUSE

The crumbling Colonial cottage wasn't built to last forever. But one determined homeowner has made it his mission to see that it will.

By Marlene A. Gage
Photographs by David Phelan
styling: Karen Foster; design: Kristin Rasmussen



In front of this one-and-a-half-story, two-bedroom cottage are the original stone walls from the original 1785 structure. The original terracotta tiles have perished with the weather. The molding is still on the second floor joists and the pattern replicated on the opposite wall.



THE OLD HOUSE WANTED TO FALL DOWN, BUT BROOKS BANKER WOULDN'T LET IT.

"From the moment I saw this house, I knew it had to be mine," he says of the simple clapboard cottage in Garrison, New York, some 60 miles north of Manhattan. And neither the square-timber stock nor the stone nor the powder-post borrels making wicks of the centuries-old oak beams could convince him otherwise. Not even his mortgage lender's doleful estimate that the house had only 12 years more to live—and the purified alcove that the black dragon provided in prospective seasons—could deter this house hunter from acquiring the Hudson Valley manor he had fallen for at first sight. "Twelve years? I still don't know how they came up with that number," he says now, nearly a decade later.

It's not like he doesn't have ample time to live. He keeps a cabin in Maine, where his low-practice books have more writing days. But the unassuming, wood-frame dwelling in rural Garrison County has become Brooks's refuge. And he has no intention of ever giving it up or giving up on it.

Birthed by firewood in 1783, the house was a post-Revolutionary War take on today's master home, a cozy place built by family and friends for a couple to begin life together and then, when fortunes allowed, expand at ease on. "Mavis" is, in essence, what the engineer who inspected the house prior to Brooks's closing more than 200 years later whimsically calls it. The oft-tangled fence had folded in at least one occasion, pull me apart, will-swinging root and carbonaceous growth gave the walls. But had overseen plenty of good pencil beams, as well as some of the structural posts and beams. The railing recalled the overback of aged wood horse. "The engineer's report was long and scary," says Brooks, "but the message was clear: Keep looking."

More interesting, of all was the foundation, in fact sheered. Tipped off such 18th-century building, the house had been erected on a layer of leveled and tamped earth, with dry lead fieldstone overlapped in rows one on top of the other to establish the footprint. A course of hand-hewn beams made from whatever local woods were available—mostly oak, chestnut, and fir—connects with mortise and tenon joints to serve as the ceiling. Massive beams and posts hold the white plate up, with rafters notched together at the roof's peak, finished by collar ties—cross members cantilevered high upon the covered gables—to keep all the hefty ridge beam. "Of the thirty

LEFT TO RIGHT: A low-hearth fire roars in the dining room, and a small but efficient latrine; endearings have been studiously kept here, mounted on the back chimney wall. A central passageway leads past a working doorway leading to the kitchen in the dining room, where a modest arrangement of dishes and a small set of cutlery are displayed. Charles Locke still decorates the estate, the temps cool, providing a bit of the classic old-world charm. In one corner, a small sink, containing and an old-fashioned basin, helped transform a small area outside the kitchen into a comfortable powder room. In the dining room, new decorations provide continuity across the space of Locke's mind, tying together the adjacent spaces.



Opposite photo was used to cover the dining room doorway opening. The original door was too narrow to allow the 8-foot 4' transom to stand upright. Brooks spent three months customizing a broad mahogany base and sides, making the width twice the width.



ABOVE AND LEFT
LEFT: In the guest bedroom, a four-poster bed and a simple English chimney cupboard offer much-needed storage.

MIDDLE: A view of the basement, the basement's grottoes housed antique fireplaces like the square one in French limestone, which features no hole for fuel storage and stone masonry spouts. The fireplace in the upstairs hall was built from stones collected with piecrust plates, thin glass for candle sconces, and brick.

ABOVE, RIGHT: In the master bedroom, the oak-paneled walls from Beauvais cathedral ("through the spandrels, the implied pointed arches were painted and gilded to heighten the richness")



» SIMPLE LIVING

The lower rooms in 18th-century Westport, with the dining room, kitchen, larder, and two smaller rooms (a sitting room and a bedroom), are left, and a walk-in closet; here office. The rear wing built as a service kitchen functions today as a large living area.



OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:
Five historical wood beams from a medieval building, at 75.



OPPOSITE, LEFT: In the kitchen there's a built-in oven that has made its name: the raised bread oven.
OPPOSITE, MIDDLE: A chimney-pot-lined washhouse contains a tub and a drain. The original polished laundry lines made during Tudor times in the mid-16th century connect to the other rooms.

or forty 18th-century houses I looked at every year, this one was unique," says Brooks, a collector of antiques with a passion for old houses. "And such an easier renovation problem inherent with authenticity."

Three months after the 1998 closing, it became apparent that electricity would not be a given. When it rained, the power would go out, and any out, which means that if the basement—dry since the late 19th century—flooded (ironically a guarantee, thanks to the absence of a drainage foundation), the sewage pump would not run. "During a renovation renovation that first fall, I found myself in the basement, waiting up to my waist," Brooks recalls. "I could never live here without my portable Handi generator."

All that "inauthenticity," as he good-naturedly refers to it, added up to what the real estate agent called "a romantic house"—one structure capable of evoking deep dreams beyond reason. And so he lived, even in its pressurized state, the house's charms were many. "My sense of emotional balance was thrown off by the exposed-beam beams, the studio with its walled-off, a promise of wood-fired cold nights," says Brooks. There was a root cellar built into an outbuilding behind the house that would one day make a nice wine cellar. The big, grassy yard was surrounded by hundreds of acres of conserved farmland, so salaried work was a given, with the possible exception of an occasional stay goat or cow.

On the dining room walls, a steady mural preserved the artistic vision of 20th-century illustrator Charles Wheler Lockhart (born at 1899), who lived and worked in the house from the 1940s until his death in 1973. During Lockhart's lifetime, he ran the high-ceilinged sunroom kitchen—an acre away from the 18th-century house, used to keep cooking from heating up the sprawling residence that was once the seat of a depressed printing studio. (Today Brooks simply refers to the space as "the big living room," in contrast with the smaller, regional gathering rooms.) Much of Lockhart's work during that period, including the most famous in the dining room and the paintings that illustrate the Madeline L'Engle's 1946 edition of *A Wrinkle in Time*.

Other Writings, makes local architecture landmarks and the Garrison's artful, wild, partly personal beauty. It was a clearing house that informed Brooks's imagination.

Even now, the 6-foot-4 fellow's head bobs clear that room's rough-hewn oak beams—which he exposed by removing a drywall ceiling—and the mustache when passing through the floor doorway. But that didn't seem to make an impact until well after the ink on the ink contract was dry. Now it shows up a few times a week. "I never seem to learn," he says. "The most likely to take a hit while carrying dinner from the kitchen is the large living room or running to get the phone."





“I’m a traditionalist,” says Brooks.



FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 106

That the house has not succumbed to the forces of nature by now can be attributed to Brooks's hard-headed dedication to its heir interests and to his good fortune in finding the right people to tend to them, starting with a small army of electricians, plumbers, and pre-construction professionals and followed by a legion of talented local artisans. Spontaneous Mystery Bugs infested the central chimney, making it impossible to install a woodstove in the original gathering room. Christopher Vassallo, a woodworker and carpenter who designs what he builds, was brought in to work on all things wooden. He has replaced rotted posts and beams, crafted mahogany frame screen doors, milled salvaged lumber to restore the porch deck, refinished the wide-board chestnut floors, and created brackets for the upstairs bath—so far. Susan English and John Hemes, a husband-and-wife team of decorative painters, have over time peers along—peeled off the walls in the house before outfitting them with matching red pigment and gesso. Perhaps their biggest challenge came in restoring Loch's mural—efface in erosion sections and evoking the spirit of the sequined drapes in the adjacent powder room.

"If I hadn't purchased this place, I would have abandoned the cap completely by now," says Brooks, who owners his weathered house's patina and grace. The house has kept his family busy but content; the new roof of wood will replace the kitchen's 200-plus-year-pitched one covered with simple sherry cupboards that Vassallo will build by hand, and replace the sunroom's lattice roofed porch with salvaged barn-board shingles to be covered by new wood shingles. The gabled roof will be stabilized. As for replacing that foundation? "I'm afraid if it falls in, the whole house will fall down," says Brooks.

The house remains a place of fits and starts—and may be long over, but he remains resolute. "These days, with the benefit of hindsight, he is pleased to find the old rustic sister when he drives up from the city. "Oh, good," he remembers each week on arrival. "It's still standing." ■

ON FACING THE RISKS:

"MY EMOTIONAL BALANCE WAS THROWN OFF BY THE EXPOSED OAK BEAMS, THE PROMISE OF WOOD FIRES ON COLD NIGHTS."

GLASSWARE FIND
LEFT: The long, low wine storage cabinet with glass-fronted doors holds a mix of vintage and recycled glass. A vintage chandelier hangs above the dining room table, which is covered with a lace or a burlap cloth. Illustration: Charles Grotto (left photo).
COURTESY: Brooks



Lorraine McHugh
teaches knotting and macrame
using traditional techniques at
Knotred Eye Classes
in New York City.





Decorating tip: If you're buying a tree, bring a wheelbarrow or cart to move it. Live trees can weigh up to 1,000 pounds.

an ever-green tradition

Choose a live tree to extend the holiday spirit long past Christmas.

Buy one now,
plant it later, then
watch it grow
year after year

DECORATING THE FAMILY
Christmas tree is among Claus
Touskae Mori's favorite child
hood memories. But as an adult,
the tradition held less a luster. "It's not that I'm
'blah,' exactly," Claus says. "I just can't get into
spending all that money on a dead tree." Many
years she went without, but then she had a son
and the guilty about denying him such a memory
of his own. So Claus and her husband developed
new seasonal strategy: They buy a live tree to start
indoors, and after the ornaments are packed
away they plant it on their acre acres in Bas-
bridge Island, Washington. "It's an old farm,"
Claus says, "so there's no fence. That way, we
are helping to save the property. And we'll have
it for years to come."

For starting or continuing a family tradition,
a live tree offers a distinct advantage over the
cut variety. "You can look at it every year and
think, 'Remember when we did that?'" says
This Old House landscape contractor Roger
Cook. "It's fun for both because you can point
out old sap, 'That's your tree.' You can check
when the tree's ground run wood chips."

A live tree often proves practical, too. It is faster, so it's more
fragile. It's more likely to fall in a cut
tree in a wind (though it can take
near to level the root ball as a cushion). And in
fact, potted trees can extend holiday
cheer conditions when strung with all-weather
lights or edible garlands for birds to nibble.

Live trees do come with limitations, though.
They can cost twice as much as cut ones. If you
like decorating long before Christmas, the tree
can't be oriented to your scheme because it won't
weather much more than a week indoors. It re-
quires more muscle to get in and out of the
house—a dozen with a root ball can weigh
up to 200 pounds. And if you live in a region that
experiences below-freeze winters, you'll need to
plan ahead so you have a place to plant the tree
after the holidays.

But there are all sorts of inconveniences when
you consider that once the tree is in the ground,
a solid value as your landscape and a reminder of
your family's yuletide fun. Read on to learn
what to do now, come Christmas, and
after the holidays will help from Roger Cook.

BY JEANNE HUBER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY KELLER & KELLER • STYLING BY EILEEN EISEL



Azalea cypress In the Southwest and Virginia, down South. Computer confirms ethereal mil shape with dense ones that are pruned to look like Christmas trees you see on greeting cards. Look at the tree from several angles to check for tend sisles and cracks in the trunk. Then run your hands over the needles. If some brownones near the buds drop that's fine. "Evergreens naturally shed needles in the fall," says Roger Bee. If those on the ends of the branches fall off, click another tree. That can be a sign of disease, insect damage, or that it's dried out.

• **Picks planting spot.** A west-facing tree needs privacy from close neighbors or helps screen against winter winds. Roger chose a spot near the driveway for that tree so it could help shield waves of parked cars from the front entry. Since most conifers favor sun, you'll want to pick a bright area, but be sure the tree is a pair away from windows. A white spruce like our emerald is even taller (10 feet) than the nearby shrubs and flowers. Allow a buffer zone of several feet between the tree's canopy and the house and surrounding hard-surface elements, as limbs could one day break against rooftops and roofs could puncture patios.

• **Prep the hole.** Because most like trees are field-grown, with roots and soil wrapped in burlap, dig a hole that's twice 9 (or 12 inches) deep—the typical height of the root ball. Any deeper and the roots will compact and cause the tree to sink. The diameter of the hole should be about 4 feet or at least twice that of the tree, so rocks can easily settle in the bottom. Roger shovels the soil onto a tarp and duct-tapes the hole with leaves to insulate its earth walls. He then covers the hole with the soil-tapped tarp and lays a second layer of leaf. More insulating—and keep hiding—leaves top the "soil sandwich." If your tree doesn't have a root ball, simply excavate after the holidays, following the same guidelines for digging the hole.

right now

• **Shop for your tree.** Visit the best outdoor head to the nursery around Thanksgiving—well ahead of the late December rush. Most nurseries will tag your specimen and healthily for you and it's time to start thinking of names. To figure out how big a tree you can handle, measure the ceiling height in the room where you plan to put it. Factor in the size of the tree, plus root ball, as well as the height of an extension on top and whether the roofline falls off the ground. Also check the tree's projected growth to make sure it won't get too big for the space you've in mind come spring.

To ensure that your planned tree thrives past the holidays, choose a species suited to your climate. Your local nursery will give the best advice, since growing conditions vary from place to place. One of Roger's top picks for the North is a Fraser fir (it's the tree of choice here because the native tree has good needle retention, a nice aroma, and a striking bluish silver color on the undersides of the branches). Native species in other regions include Douglas fir in the Northwest,



the week before

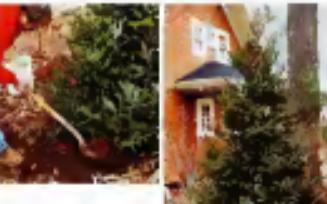
• **Transport your tree.** When you load up the tree from the nursery, grab the nylon straps and secure the burlap-wrapped root ball, or hold on to the root ball itself if it's loose in your vehicle. Just don't lift it by the trunk, which can cause the roots to tear everywhere from the tree. "To keep branches from breaking on the road, wrap them loosely with burlap. Once the tree is safely on the ground outside the house, remove the protective covering and shake the branches; successive needle pull" Then spray the tree with a mixture of antiseptic, such as one made from tea tree, to minimize moisture loss through the needles.

• **Put it in a container.** An inexpensive plastic pot works fine, but it's not much to look at. A weather laundry basket or galvanized steel washtub lends a little more character. Whatever style you choose, make sure the container is water-proof or lined with liner to prevent leaks, and that it's just slightly larger than the root ball as a snug fit will help maintain proper moisture levels. To water-preserved wooden crates used here, Roger slipped two layers of thick plastic sheeting inside. Then with the root ball still wrapped in burlap, he set the tree in the crate and filled gaps around the ball with wood chips to level and steady the tree.

• **Get it outside.** To move the potted tree, peel and score the container with a hand truck. On the side of the house, Roger gets his son helping him improvise sleds: an upside-down canoe

and a pile sleds easily over hardwood floors prevents scratches, and can be left in place under the container.

• **Protect the tree near a window.** Where it will stay cooler and免受 heat sources like fireplaces or HVAC vents, it's also a good idea to avoid decorating with string lights, which give off a lot of heat. strings of tiny bivalves or LEDs are a better choice. The best solution: water only, whether it's through the bushes. The moist mud they make should not sit in standing water. When in doubt, poke a finger into the soil to test for moisture.



after christmas

• **Moving the tree outside.** Your tree's total indoor stay should be no more than 30 days. Any longer and the house's warm dry air will lead to shriveling spring has sprung, roots will put out new growth. These new shoots will die back in winter conditions, stunting the tree's future development. In cold weather regions, transport the tree to the outdoors by moving it into a unheated garage for a day or two to give it time to acclimate to below-freezing temps. You can move the tree directly to the hole.

• **Plant it.** With the tree in the hole, remove the nylon straps that secure its root ball. The cut away as much of the surrounding bark as you can to prevent the material from wicking up water and causing the roots to dry out. Fill in around the base using the shovels with additional burlap covers the trunk up to the same point it did originally in the field. "You can see [the] main trunk lacking or charred on the bark," says Roger. Afterward, sonny the needles once more with antiseptic and cap the root ball with a 3-inch layer of mulching mulch. To help the tree establish itself in its new location, Roger recommends regular irrigation over the next few years during the growing season, adding, "With a little follow-up care, your tree should last for many Christmases to come."



Find out which
type of live trees
are best where
you live.
www.hgtv.com/home-tour
www.hgtv.com/abode



1



7

SECRET SOURCES

Direct from the pros to you
Our annual guide to the places insiders go for
those unique and hard-to-find home items

BY NICK E. MAYNARD

PHOTOGRAPH BY KAREN TIESENBERG
LTD. THE PHOTOGRAPH BY BLAISCHKOOL



WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?

The truth about us here at *This Old House* is that we can't keep anything to ourselves. As soon as we find a clever new product or a great home accent, we're itching to tell you about it. So here again is our annual compilation of 25 of the best new sources we've discovered this year. Want environmentally friendly insulation for your new addition? We've got one made from denim. Need a front door that'll make your house the most distinctive on the block? We found some cool portals carved from reclaimed lumber. How about antique glass for your cabinets? Our source scours old houses for it. Plumbing, lighting, tile, flooring—it's all there. Of course, this secret-sharing thing works both ways. If you have a favorite source we should know about, tell us at thisoldhouse.com/secret-sources. We'll try to keep it to ourselves, but we can't make any promises.

1. LIGHTING

REVOLVING & ELECTRIC LIGHTS

For the past 60 years, this shop in the French Quarter of New Orleans has been quietly producing traditional lighting for the city's finer houses, hotels, and historic landmarks. Fixtures are made from copper or brass and can be either gas or electric. The standard signature pieces are glass-and-linen lanterns based on early-17th-century European designs. New Orleans, Louisiana, 504-524-2947; revol.com

2. CERAMIC TILE

THAIKEAHN TILERWORKS This whimsical look of machine-made ceramic tile is a little too bland for your taste, check out the hand-tiled offerings from Thailand. The New Hampshire-based purveyor makes its products from pure mountain clay, using traditional



3

4

techniques such as cutting and glazing by hand, which also has slight variations. Choose from sets with reflections as Arts and Crafts or Gilt Wrought (painted below), an aggressive line that consists of ceramic tiles with recycled glass. Tiles are available in 12 glass colors, 15 glaze colors, and a variety of sizes. Keene, New Hampshire, 603-359-2947; tilerworks.com

4. STAIN GLASS

GEORGIAN HERITAGE

Jim Paul had become a furniture maker for nearly 50 years when a family friend he knew in an old movie made her mark in stained glass on the boards. Believing that she deserved representation, a young local florist—now as well as the heritage and tradition that goes with it in emotional terms—Paul began producing two styles of panels derived from them, using handblown studio

5. ORNAMENTAL METALWORK

ALAND DESIGN

This San Antonio-based company specializes in custom forged wrought-iron doors that are "designed with beauty in mind, or function in mind," says owner H. Luis Munoz. Doors are made of 13-gauge steel, with four forged rails and rods for resilience. Each door has a double-cylinder lock or Mendes lock, three rows of acrylic points, and an interior panel that keeps glass again from crack. Harry and Iag as the Texan, the 2-month-long doors can take up to three months to fabricate and will



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put a big dent in your wallet, but if you're looking for the ultimate, you'll find it here. San Antonio, Texas, 210-446-5156; alanddesigns.com

6. FLOORING

RARE EARTH HARDWOODS

An importer of exotic hardwoods, Rare Earth has a loyal following among architects, but that doesn't mean it's all-hands-on you. From its 10,000-square-foot production facility in Michigan, the company imports such species as belgian, koa, teak, and tigerwood and uses them in recessive floating and floating accusations, edges, and strip parts. Most of the wood comes from a sustainable, managed forest. Traverse City, Michigan, 616-946-0274; rare-earth-hardwood.com

7. METALWORK

CERRANT CUSTOM IRON

Architects come to the Vermont company's skill at more iron and custom metal fabrications. New and antique lighting is the specialty, but Cerrant's artisans can make just about any decorative fixture you need—a stand, dress hook-and-eye to candle racks. All the firm's metal products are guaranteed for life. Burlington, Vermont, 802-863-4914; cerrantcustomiron.com

8. SALVAGED LUMBER

URBAN REAPPROPRIATION Harvesting lumber from managed forests is responsible, but raising city trees felled by storms or construction projects is the ultimate bad-good enterprise. Instead of raking up the chipper

or the landfill, these downed trees go in Urban Reappropriation's mill, where they're processed into striking dining tables and coffee tables. If you're the hands-on type, purchase a side of western white cedar shingles and make your own creation. Seattle, Washington, 206-966-3359; urbanreappropriation.com

9. INSULATION

BOTTLED LOGIC Denim isn't just for designers and hipsters—sheep skin, it's also stuffing for your walls. Bottled Logic UltraTouch insulation is made from 85 percent denim fibers, recycled from factory waste. A bonus: insulation gives the product fire resistance and keeps bugs—and mold—at bay. Plus, the staff doesn't truck, so you can do the job yourself without messy or processor gear. Chandler, Arizona, 480-612-1724; bottledlogic.com

10. ANTIQUE GLASS

PAINTED GLASS This Maryland-based company sources glass shards from demolition around Baltimore and metropolitan Washington, D.C., to recycle, recycle, and recycle antique window glass, including wavy glass, bubbled glass, and leaded glass. Then call up owner Albert Kress, tell him the size of the glass you're looking for, or the era of the house you're renovating, and he'll try to match it. Then he'll wet clean the glass, cut it to your specs, and ship it off to you. More at the antique glass fair about 30 miles up a super road. Frederick, Maryland, 301-370-3344; antiqueglass.com

11. ARCHITECTURAL PANELS

AMERICAN ACRYLIC You're renovating your '50s ranch, and the mystery is raising red. Replacing the kitchen cabinet is no longer an option, so here's an affordable way to spruce them up: Remove the old door panels, paint the frames, and fit them with sheets of UHMWAcrylic. A low-cost alternative to frosted glass, the acrylic panels are reinforced with glass fibers for a soft, silicon appearance, akin to that old Japanese rice paper. Panels, which can be cut on-site with a masonry blade, range in size from 3 by 8 to 5 by 12 feet. West Babylon, New York, 609-677-9919; americanacrylic.com



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13. MOSAIC TILE

Mosaic Source Ceramic wall mosaic art is all the rage. This year's most popular style is the mosaic mural of the moment: Mosaic Street offers an extensive collection that includes Western plein and indoor mosaic mural. Online ordering is easy; just print your wall and mail it back to us. We'll find the right pieces for you. Some tiles can be costly, check the sole source for more pieces at less than \$7 a square foot, and keep an eye out for "buy one, get a free" deals.

Los Altos Hills, California, 650-962-5143; mosaicsource.com

14. HOUSE NUMBERS

CELESTINE NUMBER PLATES You've removed everything else, so why not go up to the first thing visitors see? These custom-fabricated iron address numbers (just letters) are extremely simple and easy, as hollow mandrels used for solid aluminum lettering characters come with a satin or polished finish, eliminating the need for painted and anodized finishes and 18-baked-resistant colors. There's only one problem: These super-glamorous numbers may attract unwanted attention from looker-loos curious to see what the made of your house is like.

St. Petersburg, Florida, 813-456-2340; celestinenumberplates.com

15. CEILING FANS

WOOLLEN MILL FAN COMPANY Dampers are dandy, blades look magnificent! But shades can add just the right amount of polish and style to a room. Woolen's Overhead Line is made from solid basswood, using various stains and classic joinery. Choose from 20 wood stains, or have them custom-painted to match your interior.

Lori Meyers, Nantucket, 508-457-0178; woollenmillfans.com

16. EXTERIOR DOORS

COPPER HEAD WOODWORKS Used to be, showers were made from wood. But that was before plastic encroached the pores and took over. You can still find authentic wood showers, though, if you know where to look. Copper Head makes them out of Spanish cedar, African mahogany, or western red cedar, using traditional pottery techniques. Copper, wrought iron, and powder-coated aluminum framing come standard. Alhambra, Pennsylvania, 610-456-7245; copperheadwoodworks.com

17. INTERIOR DOORS

THE STYLÉ SOURCE If you're wealthy enough to have a horse stabled with hollow-core doors, we feel your pain. So does Trifair. Its premium-grade doors are made from solid wood, instead of fiberboard (MDF), to stay stain-resistant and wood-blocking. "They are the only MDF doors built with real and real construction—real raised panel, not a solid slab of MDF—resulting in crisp, architecturally correct details," says Jason

Melton, the company's director of marketing. Doors come in 12 architectural styles, from Art Deco to Victorian, ranging at \$120. Danvers, Massachusetts, 978-464-5144; trifair.com

18. CEILING ODDOS

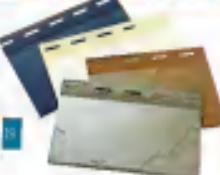
LA PUERTA ORIGINALS You might be gaga over that unique door, but its matched specifications cheaply it to an option for your home. That's where La Puerta comes in. Founded by an architect, the company specializes in one-of-a-kind rustic doors that are either inspired by a salvaged original or made from scratch. "We make new products with the philosophy of the old," says Mark Miller, the company's marketing director. In fact, you can use elements of many doors to make a completely new one. Land rates vary. Santa Fe, New Mexico, 505-946-4146; lapuertacrafts.com



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY L. HARRIS

22 SONG

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24 SPECIALTY HARDWARE

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25 PERIOD HARDWARE

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26 FAUCETS

DARICE Quality brass—the really good stuff with fancy finishes—can easily set you back \$300. European imports can be higher still. Six-year-old Darice provides an alternative, with precision products at lower price points than other established brands. Prices bear all the marks of high-quality craftsmanship: cast brass waterways, highly durable ceramic disk cartridges, and designs finished such as antiqued copper, oil-rubbed bronze, and stainless steel. Woodbury, Illinois, 877-532-5346; darice.com

27 "GREEN" FURNISHINGS

Q COLLECTION Arkansas Cochran and Jessie Johnson founded Q Collection five years ago, with the goal of manufacturing good-looking fixtures without using nonrecyclable plastic, polyurethane, or other pollutants. In addition to sofas, tables, and chairs, the company now offers a colorful selection of sustainable and biodegradable fabrics that are free of toxic finishes or dyes. New York, New York, 212-549-5400; qcollection.com

28 HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

REMASTER GARDEN SUPPLY **COMPANY:** Big-box retailers are long on general building materials but short on hardware items. This supplier stocks more than 450,000 products, from air ducts to Z-brackets and everything in between, so there's a good chance it has what you're looking for. Better still, with distribution centers across the country, most things ship out the same day. Order online, by fax, or by e-mail. Don't know exactly what the item you need is called? Just give a description, perhaps a drawing, and the company will track it down. Elmhurst, Illinois, 630-832-0160; remaster.com



FOR THE PAINTING CONTRACTOR

A just-married homeowner decides to paint his contractor brother-in-law first. It's not an uncomportable兄弟 relationship; a couple of rooms in the house. The young man gets down to the task of hard wall work. Today starts off day Saturday and Sunday morning. When his father-in-law arrives for Sunday dinner, he finds his son-in-law lying on the floor in a pool of sweat, wearing a tuxedo and an overcoat.

"Are you okay?" the father-in-law asks. "What are you doing?" The son-in-law replies that he wanted to prove his competence by painting the house. "So why are you dressed that way?" the father-in-law asks.

"Well," the young man replies. "The directions on the paint can said, 'For best results, put on your coat.'"

Q Why do painters get up so early?
A Because they're very emotional.

Q How many union carpenters does it take to screw in a lightbulb?
A None. That's an electrocution job.

FOR THE SUMMER HAILER
A single mom who's a summer job enthusiast. "We need some free by item," he says.

The manager replies, "You must be here, don't you?"

The paychecks hit his head and says, "Tiltz check."

He drives back to the job site and starts in an hour. "Wait, I meant by item," he says.

"All right. How long are you need them?"

The guy pauses for a minute and says, "I better go check." An hour later he returns apologetic and says to the manager, "I'm sorry, we're gonna have to wait."

A paving contractor walks into a bar with a lump of asphalt under his arm. "A beer, please," he says to the bartender. "And one for the road."

color

BY

number

Trade secrets
to make painting
your rooms so
easy in 1-2-3

deborah
boldt/kate

COLOR EFFECTS: Painting walls in a couple wacky colors. Mix the deep red and bright green at left, and formulating each several layers of varnish. Paint ceiling in warm terracotta brick color. Red walls create the drama during dinner parties; white highlighting the white wainscoting and trim. Red overcoat also leaves the ceiling sandy, making the space feel cozier and more covered — a plus in a room designed for conversation.



So you've rechristened your house like a skilled surgeon, fixing structural flaws and preserving each room's distinct architectural character. But something's still missing.

More than likely, that something is color—the room's secret weapon. Do you know that crown molding can visually raise the ceiling or lower it depending on how it contrasts with the walls? Or that deft use of color can turn one room into a lively gathering place and another into a relaxing space for curling up with a book? If you're comfortable with us, however, and don't feel freeze in front of the aisle of color chips at the home center, you're not alone. So we went to readers—and our own resident renovators—to identify the color questions you're likely to ask. Then we pitched them to paint pros, colorists, and designers around the country and asked them map the trends of their trades. Use this primer to make sense of those confusing chip strings, then pick out a palette that will bring out the best features of each wall, nook, and niche in your house. No more panic in the paint store.

1 • My downstairs walls are all off-white. It's so boring! When is a good time to start adding color?

"Paint the space as a whole to be approached one room at a time," says Susan Engels, a specialty painter and color consultant in Cold Spring, New York. English often starts in the dining room, a space where dramatic colors like red, gold, and terracotta warm up, and the soft lighting appears to prize those enhanced warmth. Then she crooks down, looks at the adjoining spaces, with shadows that play a supporting role. "Since the rooms typically flow into one another, keep in mind you'll be viewing them in context," says English. She painted her own dining room a deep pumpkin, and the adjacent hall and closet in muted shades of green, gray, and khaki.

2 • Our kitchen is open to both the dining room and the living room. What's an easy way to paint colors that will blend well together?

If varying your color choices from room to room is too much on the budget, try painting neighboring spaces over shades "just a rung away from each

other you feel good. In private spaces, personal preference rules."

3 • We have an open plan on the first floor. Is it best to stick to a single paint color?

"Continuity is important on the ground floor, but color can help 'tune' a big open space, separating the dining area from the TV room, for instance. There's no need to stick to a single color or even a single color palette that is either all warm (red, orange, yellow) or all cool (blue, green, bright white). However, by using muted, darker tones, there's a better chance the colors you choose will flow into one another," says Terri Blodgett, a color stylist for Valspar. She recommends leaning toward colors softened by a bit of gray; these are often found in historical palaces. Bright colors can be good in small doses—accessories—on furnishings, floor coverings, even flowers.

4 • I always get confused when painting a door and its casing. When do you stop one color and start the next? It's not an expensive short cut, but the

other on the paint chip strip," advises color expert Mary Flax, vice president of marketing for Behr. Or we switch shades in buff, beige, or gray in a bridge between room palettes to hide, rather than contrasting colors. If rooms are typically closed off from one another—such as the case with separate bedrooms, for example—coordinate the colors you paint them to look like one another.



rule of thumb goes something like this: Paint the face of the door the color of the trim or the room faces when shut, and the edges of the door the same color as the trim at the room's swing-out. This is a good example of why, if you're using different wall colors in adjoining rooms, they need to work well together. "Doors tend to open, so you'll have the trim color leach into adjoining rooms if a given space is a regular base," observes painter Susan Engels. So, let's say you have a brown-red door opening into a room with pale yellow walls. "This can be an effective accent color in the space where it doesn't 'belong'—if it's carefully considered."

5 • What about an asymmetry with two or a pocket door?

Keeping trim color consistent in adjoining rooms that have open entryways offers a sense of cohesiveness, providing an unbroken line that is pleasing to the eye. In an open plan, consider painting all the trim white, even where wall colors vary.

6 • Should the trim color always be lighter than the walls?

For contemporary settings, Maxwell Gilkerson Ryan, co-founder and sole proprietor of the blog *apartmenttherapy.com*, suggests painting trim one shade lighter than walls—even if the walls are white—to bring out "complexity and depth." In more traditional interiors with colored walls, white trim creates a clean, classic look.

The wood, draper or stained wood trim may be historically appropriate in paired house styles such as Craftsman and Queen Anne. Just keep in mind, "Dark trim creates visual interruption that can make a room look busier and smaller," points out Susan Engels.

7 • How close will the paint chip be to the color once it's up on the wall?

These tiny slabs of color are a big source of frustration for many homeowners. "Any color you choose, unless it's a very light pastel, is going to look brighter on the wall," says Terri Blodgett. On the flip side, she says, colors are generally arranged from lighter to deeper, or even "darker" to

"darker," more neutral, value. Also, some colors tend to appear darker when used over a large expanse, so you might consider picking a paint chip a shade lighter than the one you're trying to achieve. Remember, too, that any color will play off adjacent colors. That's why Becky Stark, senior designer with Sherwin Williams, cautions against coming up the chip strip too



COLOR COORDINATING One way to give adjoining rooms improved floor-to-ceiling drama is to paint them together with the same undertones. Like the yellow-based red walls in this sunroom, which are accented with a white door and trim. From there, the room flows into a room beyond, and into a painting transition. "Paints that typically coordinate closely from room to room—office, bedrooms, and powder rooms, for example—don't usually do this easily with their neighboring spaces."

individual boxes and looking at the variations case by case.

8 • What's the most reliable way to test a paint color?

"Love it with it for a bit before you commit," says Flax. The tone of the room, the amount of natural or artificial light, and competing elements—ranging from floating mullions to built-in wall niches

COLOR PSYCHOLOGY Color can elicit emotional responses. In general, cool colors (blues, greens, and greys) are perceived as peaceful and inducing while warm colors (like red, orange, and yellow) convey a sense of drama and energy. Cool colors tend to appear smaller — like the ice cube that covers the water; thus, warm colors are a good way to enhance visual space.

the way a particular color is perceived. Another of pain companies will small size of space for sampling. Use one to paint a big piece of foam-core board with your top choice. Place it in various spots around the room, and see how it reflects the upholstery and responds to the quality and amount of light in the room over the course of a few days.

9 • I really like red. How can I use it without choosing Stephen King?
Don't do it. "People think small rooms have to be white," says Debbie Zommer, a color expert with Robert St. Hunt Paint Quality Institute. "But bold colors like cherry or magenta can be spectacular in your smallish rooms, like a powder room." Even if the rest of the ground floor is open, an enclosed space can benefit from the "warm" factor that red colors offer without overwhelming visitors when the door is closed.

In a larger room, designers carefully highlight architectural features and additional interest. Try painting an above a rich reddish brown or using dark blues down on just one wall, to create a focal point. Becky Spak likes to add drama to the wall opposite a fireplace in a way to "balance" a room, while Maxwell Gillingham-Ryan suggests brightening the color on the side with the fewest windows and doors to create a "show wall."

10 • Where else can I repeat colors, without painting the whole room?

Colorfully painted interior doors and accents will also make a home more contemporary settings, says painter Jason English. To refresh a traditional setting, the recommended practice is to use a deeper color than the walls as the ceiling, the result of a built-in with a deeper or lighter shade of the wall color. For more contrast, use a complementary color — with pale blue walls, for instance, use a bookcase with peach.



11 • How can I use paint colors to 'lift' a low ceiling?

To give low ceilings the illusion of height, paint them white and only crown molding the same color as the wall, this will keep from interrupting your gaze upward.

12 • Do I have to paint all ceilings white?
It is a trend, yes. But rules are meant to be broken.

A touch of color on the ceiling can even brighten up and give a space a more finished look. "Paint the ceiling a soft pink by painting a corner or beam," says Behr's Mary Rees.

Just keep in mind matching Koch-Issel Jewell, a color consultant in Orange Park, Florida, has learned. "Walls shades like their yellow tones

on a surface where no sun ever falls, turning bluish and grayed," she says.

13 • What are any advice for painting a wall with a chair rail?

First, figure out what effect you'd like. Keeping color consistent down and below the rail keeps the look clean and highlights the molding itself. Opting for a lighter shade over the rail avoids a trap-heavy look; lighter colors pull the eye upward, and darker shades, downward. So, if the room has ceiling that's more than 9 feet high, you may want to consider painting the area above than a darker color than the portion below, to introduce a sense of intimacy.

14 • How do I use color to make the most of a small space?

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEBBIE ZOMMER, COLOR EXPERT WITH ROBERT ST. HUNT PAINT QUALITY INSTITUTE



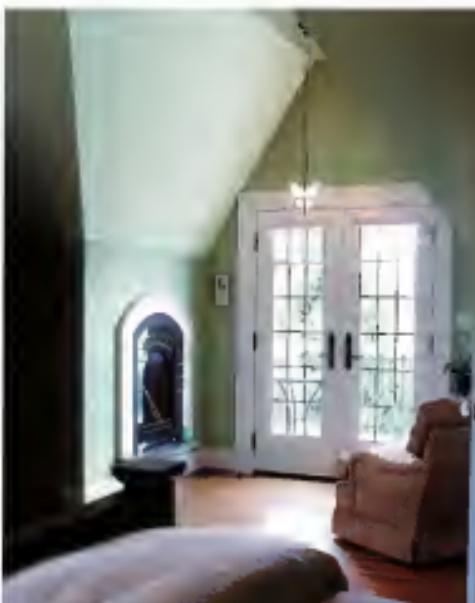
Learn how to choose complementary colors by using the color wheel at behindthescenescolors.com/colorscouts

a little relaxing, depending on the tint, tone, or shade." Research done for this article indicates that yellow can stimulate the brain, so it might be worth considering for rooms where homework is done, because yellow is believed to be the goal aggression by its challenge.

17 • How much does paint color really matter?

The psychology of color is a major education among great professionals. Many say you should choose a color

COLOR ILLUSION Use color to call attention to a room's architectural details or distract from negatives. In this bedroom, using a pale green off-white changes the short walls by blending them into the octagon-shaped ceiling. The octagon is a good enough to create different shadows depending on how the light hits it, adding more depth and dimension. Crop electrician lights the room's body to features, including the fireplace and a pair of French doors.



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WORKSHOP

— 7 — TECHNIQUES, TIPS, AND YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



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Ask This Old House

NEED AN EXPERT? WE'VE GOT FIVE, READY TO ANSWER YOUR HOME QUESTIONS



Frosting Vents

Our roof vent pipe sometimes gets blocked by ice in the winter. When this happens, just one toilet flush will suck the traps dry and fill the house with a wicked septic tank odor. My husband then climbs on the roof with a kettle of hot water and pours it down the pipe. This works perfectly, but it's rather inconvenient. Can you suggest an easier way?

ELIZABETH WILHELM, VERNON, B.C., CANADA

Robert Berkebile replies: Rather inconvenient? Arguably that doesn't compare to an icy roof in downtown Chicago.

Although I'm not a big advocate of rooftop heating cables, that one case is where they might be utilized. You could wrap the cable around the vent—before winter comes—and plug it in whenever you think ice might be forming. Or you could get a cable that's thermally controlled. It might also help to cover the pipe with insulation, particularly where it passes through the attic.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has had such suggestions. So far, no up-and-down Y-channels into the vent stack just inside your roof. When the vent closes at the roof, uncover the closure's access plug and push a stiff wire up the pipe to open the plug. Then your kettle could be used for something better, like making hot chocolate.

Vaulting a Ceiling

How hard would it be to put vaulted ceilings in my bedroom and living room?

JANETTE FIORINI, GRESHAM, OREG.

You'll need a professional come along, it's a fairly straightforward project; as others, it's practically impossible. I don't know enough about your house to give you a specific recommendation, but I can help you figure out what's involved and what you can take a look. The more handles you find, the more extensive, and expensive, the job will be.

First, head to the attic. If you see a complicated framework of 2x6s held together with prefabricated metal plates, your roof is framed with trusses. You'll have to remove the entire roof structure to vault the ceiling. But if it's done traditionally with big lumber joists, the roof can stay in place.

Second, measure the depth of the valleys. Anything less than 5½ inches isn't deep enough to insulate sufficiently, unless you use spray-in foam. With batt insulation, you have to allow for a 1½-inch air space to ventilate the underside of the roof. Spray-in insulation doesn't need an air space.

Third, check for mechanical complications: ducts, plumbing waste, HVAC equipment, and wiring. Anything in the area to be vaulted will have to be relocated. You'll need an HVAC contractor to determine whether your heating system can handle the increased volume of air with a vaulted ceiling. Also, before you start the work, consult a structural engineer to make sure the collar posts are in the right place to support the walls during spreading apart after the ceiling posts are removed.

The carpentry itself isn't that difficult. Once the collar has been fastened horizontally between opposite pairs of rafters, it can be nailed to the underside of the rafter to provide solid backing for the new ceiling surface. Frankly, you're in for a lot of mess and disarray, but you probably know that already.

Duckled Porch Boards

Ten years ago, a carpenter replaced all the old deck boards on our front porch with long tongue-and-groove 2x6s (G&T Mill-grain). They were then primed and painted. Now every winter the floor buckles, and in the spring it flakes out again. What went wrong—and how can I fix it?

DAVID POPP, HAWTHORNE, N.J.

Mark Herlihy replies: That could be a number of things wrong here, but they basically all come down to too much moisture on the wood. Are the gates working without no water seeping onto the deck? Is it properly pressure-treated or does it sit per floor—or water drains off? Are the plantings around the porch shading off or overhanging under the deck? Any of these things could cause the wood to swell and expand in width.

The grade of wood isn't helping things, either. "D" is a second-tier, "appearance" grade, which means that most of the boards are flat-sawn, with the grain roughly parallel to the board face. Flat-sawn boards expand and contract more than vertical-grain wood, which has rings nearly perpendicular to the face. To make matters worse, all that swelling wood is pushing against your porch joist and your house without anywhere to go. Buckling is the inevitable result.

Here's the fix: Pull up the boards, prime all their edges and bottom faces if they aren't primed already, and have them set nose-to-tail end-to-end through the tongue and into the joist. Don't forget to leave a ½- to ¾-inch expansion gap where the sole of the decking meets the house to the piers.



Here's a secret products: Every winter, the decking on this porch buckle severely. Mark Herlihy suggests this.

and humidity. Is there any way to block the intake of this equipment noise?

DAVID PITTARD, NORTH CANTON, OHIO

Mark Herlihy replies: You can't block all the noise, but you can do it in doses. How much you block depends on the season of time and money you are afraid to put into the project.

The first (and cheapest) option is to have all the equipment covered. Tell whoever is doing the work that you want in noise-free zones. A little lubrication or adjustment might do a lot of good. You can also cover the decks with sound-absorbing board.

Another option is to isolate the enclosures in an enclosed, insulated room with a weatherstripped door, but that can get complicated. Local codes may have restrictions about enclosing heating equipment, and you have to provide sufficient space and a door that's wide enough so it can be replaced.

Your best option might be to tilt the pent屋裏 with bare 2x6 fibers or insulation and cover the heat source with ½-inch drywall. Before you attach the drywall, screw isolators down steps to the inside of the joists and cover the steps with sound-deadening seismic tape. The tape and isolators absorb the sound vibrations that would otherwise pass from the rigid drywall into the joists. Layering wall-to-wall carpet over a closed-in porch floor would also help. Although this won't stop a severe sound transmission by nearly 40 percent, you ought to notice a big improvement in your生活质量.

There are all sorts of other sound-control products you could use to help minimize noise, such as double absorber sheets of drywall and acoustic fiberglass bats. But like anything, the quieter you want it, the more it's going to cost you. ■

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Include a color photo of the problem where relevant. Purchaser receives free shipping for the photo(s) and may keep the original. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for reply transportation if you want your photo(s) returned.

ONLINE VIDEO
Keep the heat in this winter using tips from Bob Vila's *Bob's Backyard*, plus lots of thisoldhouse.com/video

PHOTO BY JEFFREY L. DUNCAN FOR THIS OLD HOUSE; ROOF AND DECK BY KEN HARRIS FOR THIS OLD HOUSE



DAVID PITTA RD/CONTRIBUTOR



MARK HERLIHY/CONTRIBUTOR



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WORKSHOP

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Instant Old

Diluted paint and a pigmented glaze can create the aged look



RELATED STORY P. 62
"A STYLISH HOUSE"
There's a secret to making the painted surfaces of a house look old and worn: wear if they were just installed last month. Decorative painters Susan Engle and John Hanes share some of their basic techniques for creating archaic timeworn looks on beams and distressed woodwork.

1. Paint. Apply a flat, off-white latex paint with a clean brush, which leaves a thin, uneven finish. That's a good thing.
2. Distress. Sand off the aging process by randomly attacking the paint with a putty knife.

scraper or 80-grit sandpaper.

3. Glaze. Add a glaze wash of off-white paint to a part of acrylic glaze, then tint it with pigment ink (watered-down) and yellow ochre (for aged warmth). Glaze and tubes of tint are available in craft stores. Brush the glaze over the distressed paint.
4. Patina. Let the glaze dry for about 10 minutes, then rub it down with 3000-grit sandpaper. This removes some of the glaze from the high spots and leaves it in the low spots, giving the illusion of woodwork that has aged in place.

—ERIC AND RACHEL



Demolish a Tiled Floor

The job goes fast once the grout is gone

RELATED STORY P. 58
"RELAX & REHAB"

The easiest way to get rid of an old tile floor is just to pull it up right over it. But it's not always that easy. It's a process or the pulling tile isn't well attached (from that old grout) or the tile is stuck.

In several ways that are only a few feet square, a hammer and a cold chisel will do the job—eventually. Or bigger pieces (but known as a demolition hammer) is better but will cost about twice as much as the tile's price. This demolition hammer is a pick hammer (about 1,000 strikes per minute) worked faster than any would be John Henry could pound by hand. The hammering action starts only when the chisel tip is pushed against a hard surface, so the operator remains in full control without fatigue. You can rent one of these tools (and chisel) for about \$30 a day. (In most cases, you won't even need to rent.)

Whether you decide to work by hand or get a power wrench, you still follow these steps:

1. Protect yourself. Wear goggles, plane and adjust mask. Test the work area to protect to keep the gritty dust from infiltrating the rest of the house.

2. Attack the grout. First, plunge the chisel vertically into the joint, then tilt it at a 60-degree angle to the surface and plow it through all the grout lines. (With a demolition hammer, you can rotate the chisel into position first before you hit the tool horizontally.) Work as well where ever needed until you break the grout. Remove debris where you risk overshooting the tile past the chisel's verticality as you pull out the grout.

3. Get under the tile. Since hammering poplocos the grout is removed. Remove the rest by placing the chisel close to the floor tiles you cannot hammering it under the edge of a tile. Hammer you can get the chisel the wider the tile will come up without damaging this substrate. Work from the middle of the floor toward the edges until all the tiles are up.—TR

TRY THIS
CUT IT AIRSTRIK

After mixing up a batch of plaster, let it sit (make) for 24 to 48 hours so the liquids and solids have a chance to fully combine. When it's ready, it should have the consistency of peanut butter.



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1.1. Member of County Audit Subscribers	111,330	108,332
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2. Sale Through Dealer and Customer Sales Reps, and Corporation Sales	46,857	46,851
2.3. Other Dealer Through-the-Mail	0	0
2.4. Total Paid Circulation	118,187	106,334
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2.1. Free Circulation	108,002	102,241
2.2. In-Cross	0	0
2.3. Other Cross-Mailed	0	0
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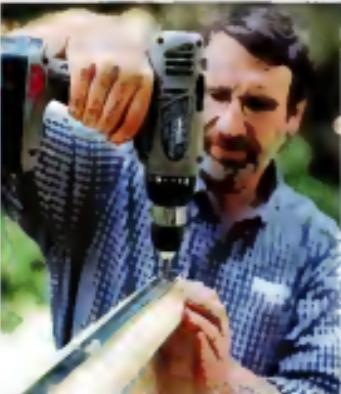
Norm's Notebook

> MASTER CARPENTER NORM ABRAHAM'S TECHNIQUES FOR THE BITS FEATURED IN TOOLBOX, P. 47

BITS FOR DRILLS

Work the Clutch

If you're drill is getting infoxicated whenever you're countersinking, set the speed switch for "slow" for maximum torque and better control. Also experiment with the clutch: the numbered dial near the clutch that regulates the drive when it feels a certain amount of resistance. You'll know the setting is right when you can sink the screw in full throttle without the bit skipping or jerking off the screwhead.



Sharpening a Spade Bit

When it comes to spade bits, you might well buy new ones because it's nearly impossible to sharpen them. I've written many stories about how to do it, but I've never really been able to get it right. You can easily sharpen one with a sharpie, though.

Clamp the bit upright in a vise, then rock the bit on the bit's cutting edge until it rests flat against the vise. From the flat across the edge, rotate five times. Do the same thing to the opposite edge and at the heel/middle of the bit's point. Finish up by holding the bit flat against each of the bit's faces and making one stroke to remove any burns left behind.

My Must-Have Bits

I have 14 bags of them—genuine sets cut out them that have 300 plus pieces, most of which you're never going to use. This is what I look for instead:

- Spade bits:** These should range in size from 1/4-inch to 1 1/2 inches. I prefer smaller increments because it gives me more control over a hole. Anything bigger than 1 1/2-inches will feel like a sledgehammer angled bit.
- Drill bits:** Phillips and square-set bits, ranging 1/8 to 1/2 with an emphasis on 1/4. I like these for start holes because I only use them when something which is less likely to slip and fall the screwhead.

(Warning: Take care that a small enough bit may catch in the wood.)

It doesn't need to have a lot of flats, but it should have three fairly enough so I can grip it easily. Don't use a countersink bit because the size leftover from the bit's tip is too big.

It doesn't need to have a lot of flats, but

it should have three fairly enough so I can grip it easily. Don't use a countersink bit because the size leftover from the bit's tip is too big.



Every time you tighten a three-jawed chuck with six-inches stroke, you're just adding stress to the bit face of the bit is sharp—and on the shank, too. Otherwise, as earlier, how tightly you turn down on the chuck the bit will slip when you start the drill.

HOME TIP

You'll drill更深
dovely if you don't
try to punch a hole
through the wood
all in one shot.
Instead, pull the
bit out partway
as it's spinning
to clear away the
chips from the
cutting edges.

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THE INDIAN SWELL THOMPSON house is a late-Victorian era estate with woodwork of the Queen Anne style. Located just outside downtown Goldsboro, North Carolina, built in 1903, it's named for the woman who owned it from 1928 through the 1950s. We imagine she lived there quite happily, too; almost would be hard to be depressed in such a sun-drenched estate, with natural light pouring through an abundance of original four-over-four windows. The estate also boasts full-length porches with original spindlework and turned posts, and a front-gable decorated with hand-awned shingles. But it requires a major rehab including new electric, plumbing, and HVAC systems (but the work will be more affordable thanks to the state's 30 percent tax credit for historic properties such as this).

Goldsboro is a city of around 40,000 that's also home to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, in full boom or busting a comeback after years of slow job growth and economic malaise. Dozens of new businesses have moved into the historic downtown. A shiny new city hall recently opened for business, and the town's experiment of transportation is providing the 1909 Union Station to provide bus and rail access to nearby Raleigh and Winston-Salem, both about an hour or so away. The city is also working with Downtown Goldsboro Development Corp. and Preservation North Carolina to try to rehabilitate houses and sell them cheaply to anyone willing to adhere to a rehabilitation agreement and some protective covenants. So far, they've sold 13. But 22 more, including this one for the asking price (upper), are still up for grabs. —Matt P. Hinshaw



Up for grabs: This three-bedroom, two-bath house in the historic downtown area of Goldsboro, N.C., is listed at \$19,700. It's been on the market since July 2011.

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The late-Victorian era house has 2,000 square feet of space. Most of its 10 rooms are original except for the kitchen, which was gutted and remodeled by architect Brian Blythe.



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